BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY REVIEW

50 YEARS

SUMMER 2025
VOL 51 NO 2

The Riches of
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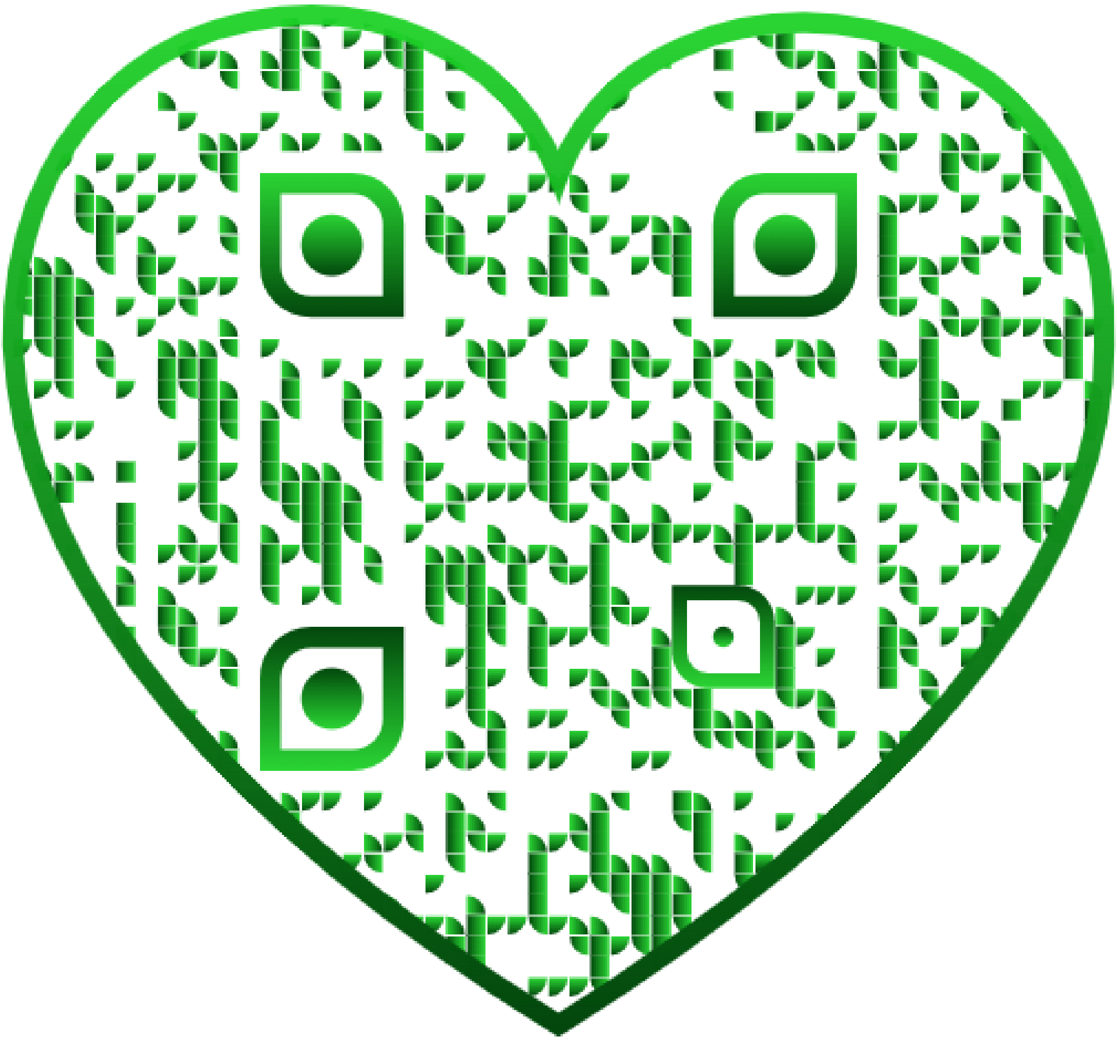

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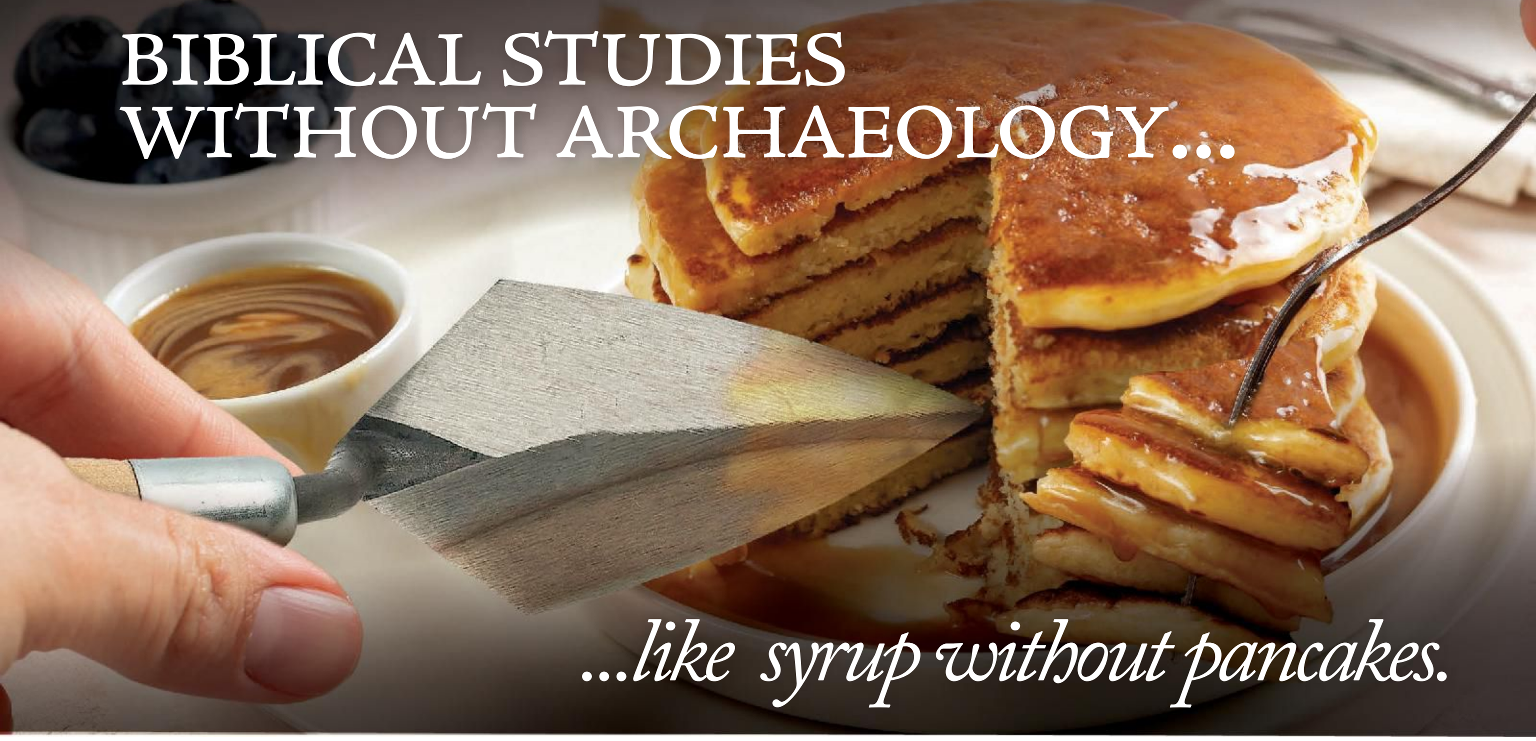
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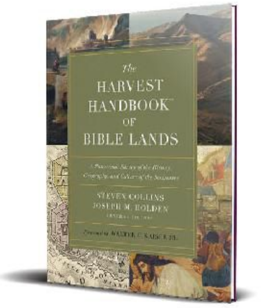

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ON THE COVER: This 2-foot-tall bronze winged feline figure is believed to be from Tartessos, the area along the Guadalquivir River in Spain, a region known in the Bible as Tarshish. In this piece are commingled the rich natural resources of Tartessos and the artistic style of the Phoenicians. The object, however, is unprovenanced, and some scholars question its association with Tartessos. Learn more about the problems with unprovenanced objects at **barmag.org/provenance.**

PHOTO: PENTA SPRINGS LIMITED / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

FEATURES

32 From Tyre to Tarshish: The Phoenicians in Spain

Carolina López-Ruiz, David Schloen, and **José Suárez Padilla**

By the late ninth century BCE, Phoenicians from Tyre and Sidon had established a robust Mediterranean trade network. In southern Iberia—likely biblical Tarshish—they established a coastal settlement at Cerro del Villar. Archaeology reveals a thriving commercial port that developed fruitful relations with local communities while preserving the traditions and customs of the Phoenician homeland.

42 Judah's African Ally: Taharqa and the Kingdom of Cush

James K. Hoffmeier

When King Hezekiah of Judah was bracing for Assyrian attack at the close of the eighth century BCE, he fortified Jerusalem and sought alliances. According to the Bible and Assyrian sources, one unexpected ally arrived from the kingdom of Cush in present-day Sudan. Known as Tirhaqah in the Bible, he must have been only a young prince when he led Cush's army to Judah's defense in 701.

49 The Mysterious Mount Zion Mug

Shimon Gibson

A fragmentary stone mug from the first century CE, discovered during the Mt. Zion excavations just outside Jerusalem's Old City walls, bears a remarkable secret: a carefully incised inscription partially written in a rare cryptic script previously known only from the Dead Sea Scrolls. Investigate this mysterious text and what it may reveal about Jewish ritual practices during the Second Temple period.

56 Dating Game: How Archaeologists Date the Biblical Past

Yoav Vaknin

Knowing when ancient artifacts were created, used, or destroyed is crucial for understanding the biblical past. Archaeology's methods for dating sites, buildings, and artifacts have changed dramatically since the early days of the discipline. Explore the advanced scientific techniques that are helping modern archaeologists resolve longstanding historical and chronological debates, including the dating of key biblical battles.

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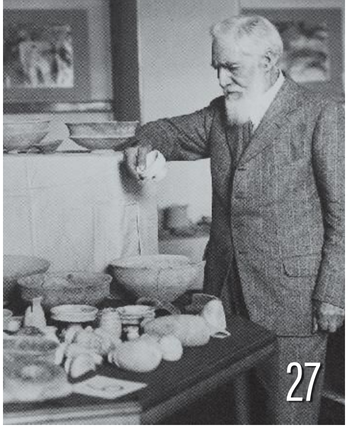
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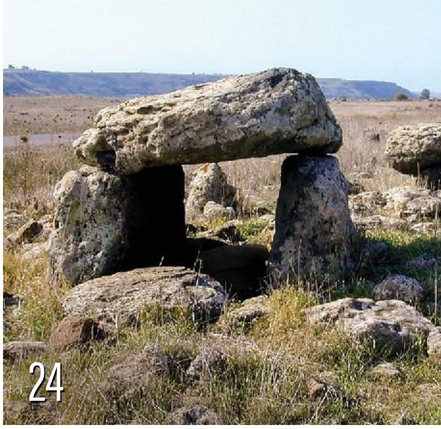
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WEB EXCLUSIVE

The House of Tyre

barmag.org/tyre

ERICH LESSING / ART RESOURCE, NY

According to the Bible, the powerful Phoenician city-state of Tyre was among Israel's strongest allies during the days of Solomon, with the city's wealthy ruler, Hiram, famously providing materials and know-how to help build the Jerusalem Temple and Solomon's palace. In this Web Exclusive, explore what history and archaeology reveal about the legendary "House of Tyre" and the important role the city played in expanding Phoenicia's reach across the Mediterranean.

BAR ON THE WEB

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Travel the Biblical World This Summer

JUST IN TIME FOR SUMMER VACATION, our latest issue takes you on a trip around the world, or at least the world as it was known to the biblical writers—a world that stretched well beyond ancient Israel to exotic, distant lands that may often have seemed more myth than reality.

Our first stop is the Bay of Málaga in southern Spain, where our cover story, "From Tyre to Tarshish," explores the latest archaeological evidence for Phoenicia's early expansion into the western Mediterranean and its legendary trade connections with the biblical land of Tarshish. We then venture to the fabled land of Cush, along the far reaches of the Nile in modern-day Sudan, to visit the great temples and pyramids of "Judah's African Ally" and learn about Taharqa, the Cushite ruler who came to the aid of King Hezekiah in his confrontation with the Assyrians in 701 BCE. Our journey continues in Jerusalem, where we join an excavation just outside the walls of the Old City to examine the unique cryptic inscription of "The Mysterious Mount Zion Mug" and what it may reveal about how Jewish purification rituals were performed during the time of Jesus.

More travel adventures await in Strata and Epistles, where we investigate the so-called "Table of Nations"—the list of Noah's descendants who repopulated the earth after the Flood (Genesis 10)—and the myriad sources where the biblical writers gained information about the broader geographic and cultural world they inhabited. Take a "Site-Seeing" tour of Jesus's hometown of Nazareth in northern Israel to visit centuries-old churches and landmarks that commemorate places and events from his formative years. In "Test Kitchen," sample a flavorful Jewish eggplant dish from medieval Spain, and in "Going, Going, Gone," learn how Sudan's ongoing civil war is placing the country's rich but little-known cultural heritage at risk.

During your journey, be sure to enjoy this issue's other compelling stories. Examine the various types of decorative amulets that many early Christians used to secure divine blessing and how such objects were likely influenced by Jewish and Samaritan traditions—much to the chagrin of church leaders. Explore less prominent but highly influential women prophets in the Hebrew Bible and how their prophetic and religious roles were similar to but also distinct from their better-known male counterparts. And join us as we sit down with James Fraser, the new director of the Albright Institute in Jerusalem, to discuss his distinguished career in archaeology and museums and what he enjoys most about being the institute's director.

Finally, this issue continues to celebrate **BAR**'s 50th anniversary with the second article in our "New Directions" series that highlights scientific dating techniques that may finally resolve some of biblical archaeology's most heated and longstanding debates. Also, be sure to catch the "Flashbacks" scattered throughout the issue that showcase some of the special discoveries, debates, and controversies that **BAR** has covered over the past five decades.

So pack your bags! This issue is going to be the adventure of a lifetime!—**GLENN J. CORBETT**

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A NOTE ON STYLE: BCE (Before the Common Era) and CE (Common Era), used by some of our authors, are the alternative designations often used in scholarly literature for BC and AD. Biblical citations come from the NRSV, unless otherwise specified.

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Biblical Archaeology Review (ISSN-0098-9444), copyright © 2025 by the Biblical Archaeology Society, is published quarterly by the Biblical Archaeology Society. All Offices at: 5614 Connecticut Ave NW #343, Washington, DC 20015-2604. Call (800) 678-5555 to subscribe. Periodicals postage is paid at PO Box 37828, Boone, IA 50037-0828.

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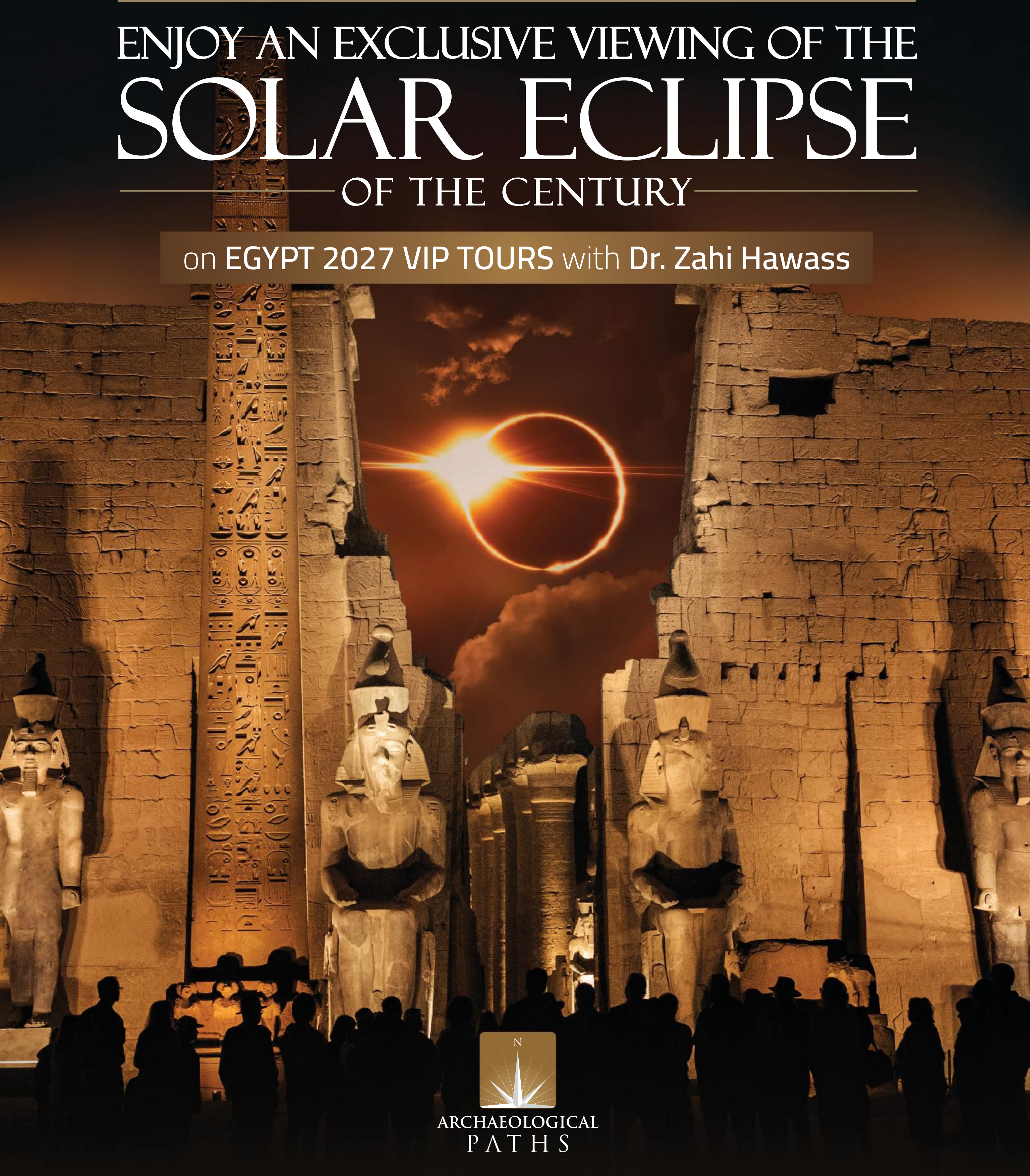
CIRCULATION STATEMENT 2025:
In the preceding 12 months, an average of 102,177 copies were printed per issue; 105,718 was the average paid print and electronic circulation; 400 was the free distribution. For the last issue before filing (Fall 2024), total copies printed: 105,927; total paid circulation: 108,490; free copies: 400; total distribution: 108,890. Average paid: 99.6%.

ADVERTISEMENT

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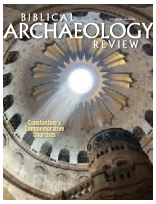

Thank you for sharing your thoughts and comments about our Winter 2024 issue. We appreciate your feedback. Here are a few of the letters and responses we received. Find more online at **barmag.org/letters**.

Hurrah and Hallelujah

ALLELUIAS to the staff and editor of **BAR**. As an Episcopal priest ordained in 1968, I have subscribed to the magazine off and on since the mid-1970s. It has always been incisive and knowledgeable reading, but often tedious if not boring (though the founding editor, Hershel Shanks, was always the highlight and a real tenacious poker in the fires!). I would usually let the magazine lapse for a year or two and then renew, looking for the biblical impinging, accessibility, and imaginativeness that is *now* surely the heart of the magazine. I now read it from cover to cover assiduously and totally enjoy it.

ARTHUR L. CUNNINGHAM
DELAFIELD, WISCONSIN

BAR IS A JOY to receive and a high adventure in learning. The Winter issue cover is beautiful, and thank you so much for the address labels that peel off easily, now revealing the whole photo!

JANE WHEELER GARCIA
GOLDEN HILL, OREGON

Forget the Tech, Stick to the Bible

THANK YOU for the latest illuminating issue. On this occasion, however, you appear to have chosen the cover with greater care than the contents, as it is not clear to me why you bothered to publish Zuzana Chovanec's article "Slumbering Dreams: Testing for Ancient Opium." It has no relevance to the biblical narrative and only a tenuous connection with the Holy Land. Instead, Chovanec devotes most of her article to the scientific techniques used to identify the substances once held by Late Bronze Age Cypriot Base Ring juglets. Important as these processes are, their elaboration seems out of place in a magazine concerned with the role of material and literary evidence in elucidating the Bible.

ROBERT STUART MERRILLEES
MAILLY LE CHÂTEAU, FRANCE

Yes, Zuzana Chovanec's article duly focuses on the scientific techniques that can tell us what was once stored in such ancient containers. Our readers may recall an array of techniques and methods that we have introduced in this same department we call "Arch-Tech," including X-ray imaging and 3D modeling used to read unopened manuscripts and magnetometry that allows archaeologists to "see" under the surface without excavating. Increasingly, such techniques are opening up new vistas on the realities of daily life in the biblical world, which is why we think it is important to explain them to our readers.—**ED.**

LET US HEAR FROM YOU!

Write us at letters@bib-arch.org or **BAR** Editorial, 5614 Connecticut Ave NW #343, Washington, DC 20015. Please include your full name, city, and state. While we welcome all reader comments, we are unable to reply to or publish every letter we receive. Published letters may be edited for length, clarity, and readability.

Don't Sideline Christian Scholars

I APPRECIATE **BAR**'s shift toward broadening perspectives and including a wide range of scholars, regardless of their religious affiliation. This inclusive approach certainly enriches the discussion. However, I believe it's essential to maintain the right balance and not overlook strong Christian scholarship. While I understand that skeptical scholars are sometimes more prominent in discussions of the Bible, there remains a wealth of valuable scholarship from Christian scholars, such as Paul Anderson, Craig Keener, and Richard Bauckham. I encourage you to engage a broad spectrum of scholars, as Hershel Shanks did so well in the past.

NICK ALBANO
EAST LONGMEADOW, MASSACHUSETTS

BAR—Equal Opportunity Offender?

AS A FORMER SUBSCRIBER, although I greatly enjoyed your older articles, I find your newer issues to be filled with biblically critical, minimalist authors whose opinions I consider highly repugnant. Until you stop producing this atheistic trash, I have no interest in any of your material.

ABRAHAM SANCHEZ
ROSEVILLE, CALIFORNIA

AFTER READING several recent issues, I find myself wondering if **BAR** has indeed become an "equal opportunity offender." First, some Jewish readers are rightly offended by the constant scholarly vocalization of the Tetragrammaton (YHWH). I am partly Jewish by ancestry and completely agree with some scholars that "the NAME" is God's personal one and not to be taken lightly. Second, we also are constantly treated to the scholarly neutral designation of dates as BCE or CE. This seems intentionally offensive to Christians, who might point out that there would be no Common Era without

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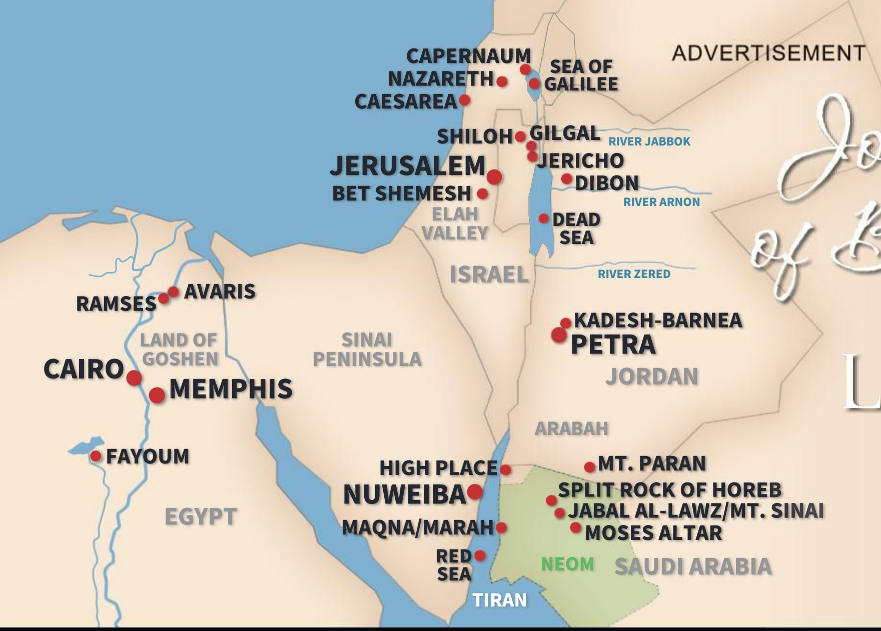
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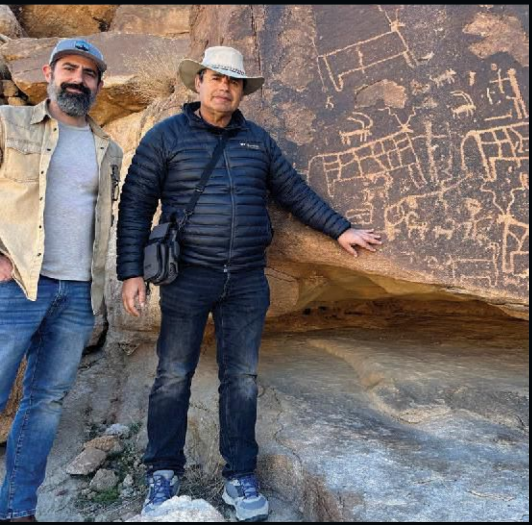

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the Christian Church. When I received your Winter issue, I was fully expecting **BAR**'s left turn to continue, but [*sigh*], as I read the articles, I see this may not be the case. I sincerely hope so!

ANTHONY HUSEMANN
TITUSVILLE, FLORIDA

It is certainly not our aim to be offensive to any of our readers, and we appreciate reader sensitivities to some of the terminology used in archaeology and biblical studies. And while we largely follow established and widely used scholarly conventions in our house editorial style, we do allow our authors to maintain their own stylistic and dating preferences as appropriate (see, for example, the use of BC dating in "Taharqa and the Kingdom of Cush," p. 42, or YHWH in "Heavenly Help," p. 16). For us, this is not a matter of being "right" or "left" but simply being fair to the scholarship, our authors, and our readers.—**ED.**

Life of Jesus in Stone

READING JORDAN RYAN'S article "The Life of Jesus Written in Stone," several caves are mentioned as locations of some of Jesus's life events, such as his birth cave and Mary's cave site of the archangel Gabriel's annunciation. However, in the Bible, there is no mention of caves in relation to these events. What gives?

ROGER BORROEL
EAST CHICAGO, INDIANA

Christian apocryphal writings tended to fill in the blanks in the canonical stories of the New Testament. Such details were likely reflections of local traditions, as their writers were not witnesses to the events nor did they know anyone who was. Already in the Hebrew Bible, caves are significant and symbolic places associated with refuge and concealment. This tradition continues in the New Testament, including in Revelation 6:15–17, where it is employed about the end times. Similarly, caves associated with Jesus were places of transition and transformation, including the cave of the annunciation, the grotto of the nativity, and the site of the ascension.—**ED.**

Watch Your Language!

THANK YOU for the news items about recent archaeological discoveries that significantly changed previous understandings and assumptions about the ancient Levant. But, considering the amount of potential archaeological discoveries still buried under the sand or lying at the bottom of the sea, it seems that **BAR** should be more circumspect in its pronouncements that something in the Bible is "myth," "anachronistic," or "untrue." You would better serve readers by saying that archaeological discoveries to date provide no support for the veracity of the particular biblical account in question.

BOB VANDERVORT
OMAHA, NEBRASKA

Mary and Martha

ELIZABETH SCHRADER POLCZER'S article "The Mystery of Mary and Martha" is the best I've read in a long while! Her suggestion that early writers may have seen Mary as a rival to Peter made me think of the *Gospel of Mary*, where Peter has a fit of pique that Jesus may have told Mary secrets that he hadn't shared with the other disciples (Peter in particular?). More evidence for rivalry?

WILLIAM PARKER
DIMONDALE, MICHIGAN

SCHRADER POLCZER'S CASE for Martha being erroneously added to John 11 is built almost entirely on scribal variants in the first five verses of the chapter. Even a cursory reading of 11:19–39, however, establishes that (unless there are more scribal "corrections" that call these verses into question), Mary and Martha were two persons. Yes, it's the obvious question: Why the scribal corrections? But should problematic variants in five verses call into question the clear presentation of two sisters in the following 20 verses?

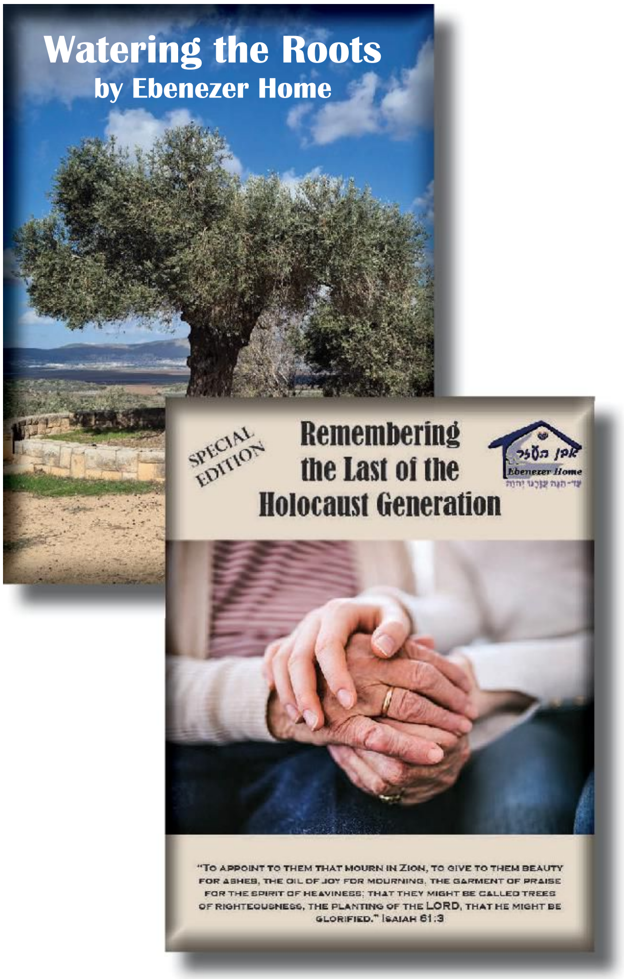
LES PAULSEN
CORBYVILLE, ONTARIO, CANADA

ELIZABETH SCHRADER POLCZER RESPONDS: *The case for Martha's later addition is actually not built on scribal variants in only the first five verses of John 11. There are instabilities around Martha's presence throughout the entire manuscript transmission of the gospel, in any verse where she might appear. As the* **BAR** *article mentioned, some gospel manuscripts state that Mary (not Martha) served the supper in John 12:2. Many other early manuscripts display similar discrepancies: Some gospel manuscripts unexpectedly name Mary as the sister who went out to meet Jesus as he was coming to see them following Lazarus's death (John 11:20, 30), and some patristic authors oddly name Mary when referencing Jesus's interactions with the family of Lazarus in John 11:27, 11:34, or 11:39. We cannot get into the details here, but readers will find a fuller picture of the evidence in my 2017* Harvard Theological Review *article titled "Was Martha of Bethany Added to the Fourth Gospel in the Second Century?"*

THE ARTICLE about scribal corrections in John 11 provides more evidence that Martha, a second sister, was added in the manuscript copies to the Lazarus story in the Gospel of John. From a purely text-critical point of view, "ones" do tend to be changed to "twos" rather than "twos" to "ones." For example, the number of individuals whom the women encounter at Jesus's tomb changes from "a young man … dressed in a white robe" (Mark) and "an angel of the Lord" (Matthew) to "two men … in dazzling apparel" (Luke) and "two angels in white" (John). So, unless one has a good reason for thinking otherwise, one would expect Mark to carry the primary reading of that story.

Also names tend to be added rather than deleted in scribal copying and editing, according to the principle of making things more specific. Thus, it is more likely that "Mary" was changed to "Mary and Martha" than from "Mary and Martha" to "Mary," unless we have a good reason to think that "Martha" was deleted.

DONALD OSTROWSKI
LECTURER IN HISTORY
HARVARD UNIVERSITY



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Jeremiah 17:7-8

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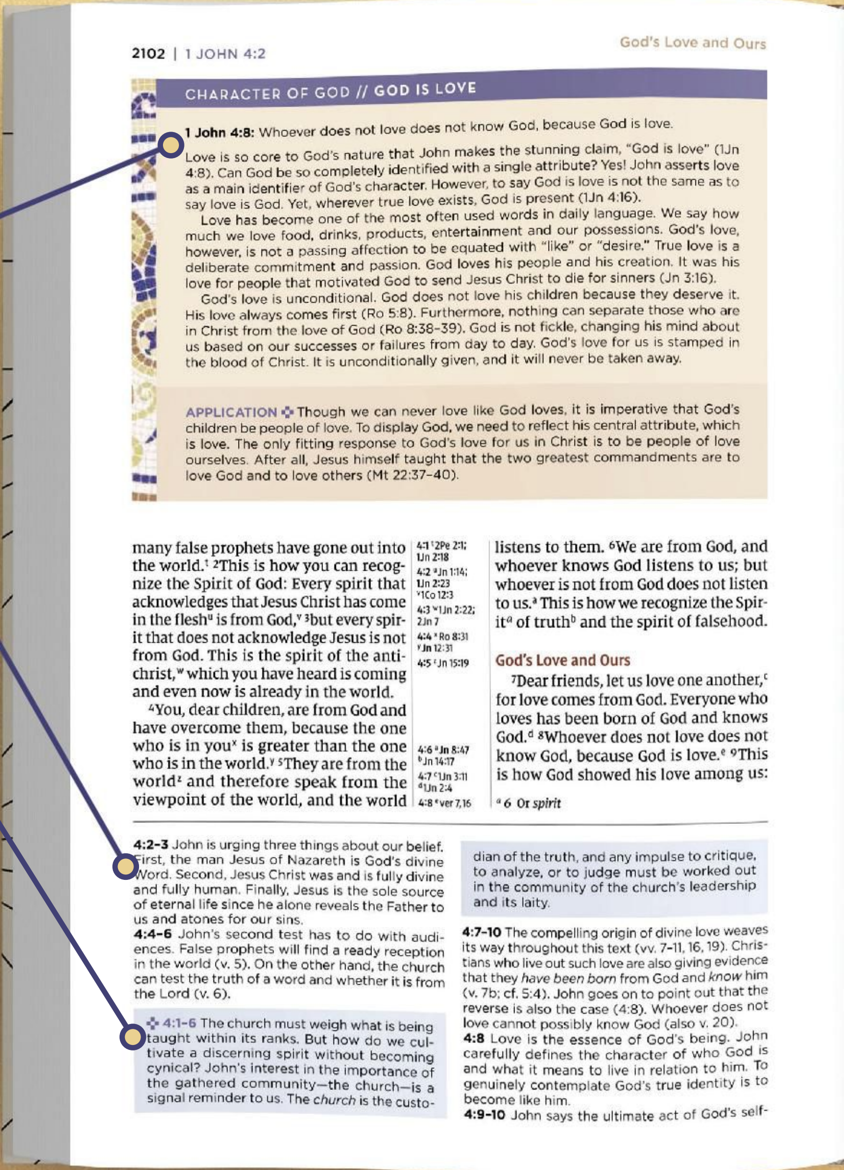

2102 | 1 JOHN 4:2

God's Love and Ours

CHARACTER OF GOD // **GOD IS LOVE**

1 John 4:8: Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

Love is so core to God's nature that John makes the stunning claim, "God is love" (1Jn 4:8). Can God be so completely identified with a single attribute? Yes! John asserts love as a main identifier of God's character. However, to say God is love is not the same as to say love is God. Yet, wherever true love exists, God is present (1Jn 4:16).

Love has become one of the most often used words in daily language. We say how much we love food, drinks, products, entertainment and our possessions. God's love, however, is not a passing affection to be equated with "like" or "desire." True love is a deliberate commitment and passion. God loves his people and his creation. It was his love for people that motivated God to send Jesus Christ to die for sinners (Jn 3:16).

God's love is unconditional. God does not love his children because they deserve it. His love always comes first (Ro 5:8). Furthermore, nothing can separate those who are in Christ from the love of God (Ro 8:38–39). God is not fickle, changing his mind about us based on our successes or failures from day to day. God's love for us is stamped in the blood of Christ. It is unconditionally given, and it will never be taken away.

APPLICATION ✣ Though we can never love like God loves, it is imperative that God's children be people of love. To display God, we need to reflect his central attribute, which is love. The only fitting response to God's love for us in Christ is to be people of love ourselves. After all, Jesus himself taught that the two greatest commandments are to love God and to love others (Mt 22:37–40).

many false prophets have gone out into the world.[t] [2]This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh[u] is from God,[v] [3]but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist,[w] which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

[4]You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you[x] is greater than the one who is in the world.[y] [5]They are from the world[z] and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. [6]We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us.[a] This is how we recognize the Spirit[a] of truth[b] and the spirit of falsehood.

4:1 [t]2Pe 2:1; 1Jn 2:18
4:2 [u]Jn 1:14; 1Jn 2:23 [v]1Co 12:3
4:3 [w]1Jn 2:22; 2Jn 7
4:4 [x]Ro 8:31 [y]Jn 12:31
4:5 [z]Jn 15:19
4:6 [a]Jn 8:47 [b]Jn 14:17
4:7 [c]1Jn 3:11 [d]1Jn 2:4
4:8 [e]ver 7,16

God's Love and Ours

[7]Dear friends, let us love one another,[c] for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.[d] [8]Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.[e] [9]This is how God showed his love among us:

---

[a] 6 Or *spirit*

4:2–3 John is urging three things about our belief. First, the man Jesus of Nazareth is God's divine Word. Second, Jesus Christ was and is fully divine and fully human. Finally, Jesus is the sole source of eternal life since he alone reveals the Father to us and atones for our sins.

4:4–6 John's second test has to do with audiences. False prophets will find a ready reception in the world (v. 5). On the other hand, the church can test the truth of a word and whether it is from the Lord (v. 6).

✣ 4:1–6 The church must weigh what is being taught within its ranks. But how do we cultivate a discerning spirit without becoming cynical? John's interest in the importance of the gathered community—the church—is a signal reminder to us. The *church* is the custodian of the truth, and any impulse to critique, to analyze, or to judge must be worked out in the community of the church's leadership and its laity.

4:7–10 The compelling origin of divine love weaves its way throughout this text (vv. 7–11, 16, 19). Christians who live out such love are also giving evidence that they *have been born* from God and *know* him (v. 7b; cf. 5:4). John goes on to point out that the reverse is also the case (4:8). Whoever does not love cannot possibly know God (also v. 20).

4:8 Love is the essence of God's being. John carefully defines the character of who God is and what it means to live in relation to him. To genuinely contemplate God's true identity is to become like him.

4:9–10 John says the ultimate act of God's self-

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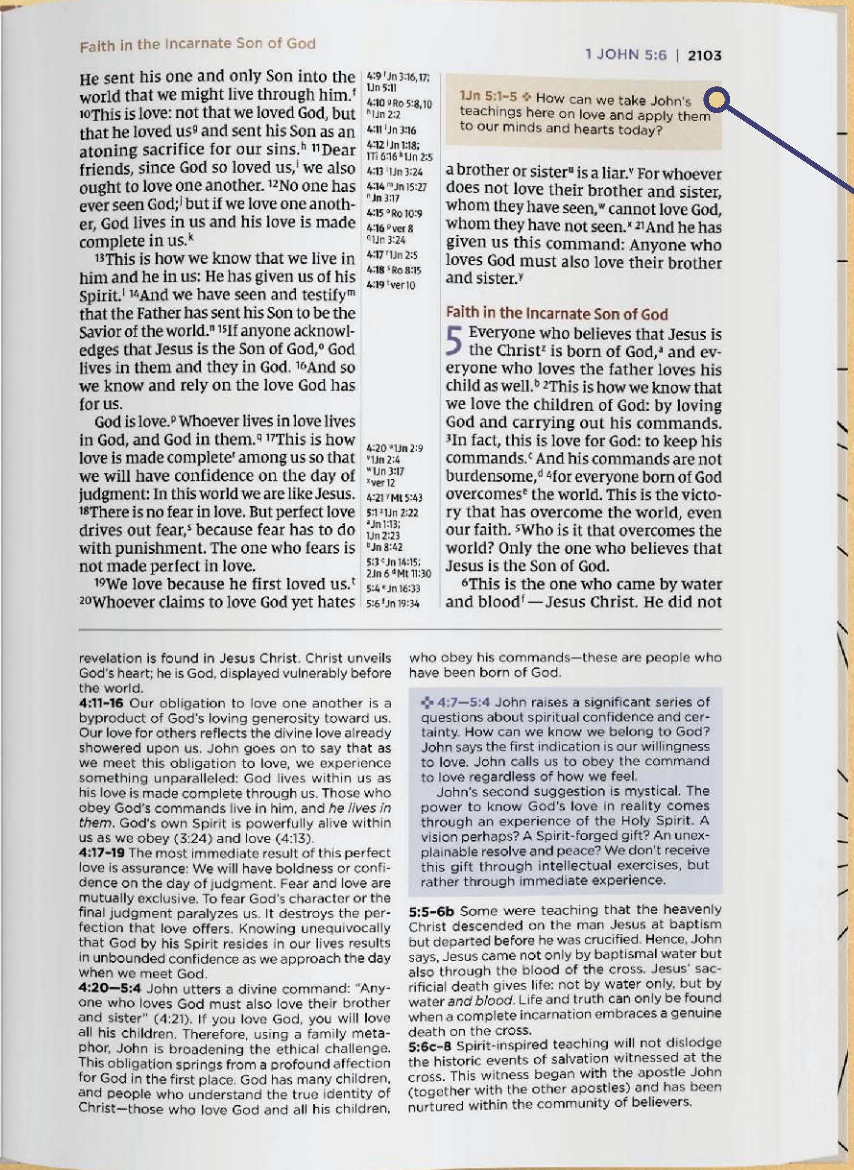

Faith in the Incarnate Son of God

1 JOHN 5:6 | 2103

He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.[f] [10]This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us[g] and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.[h] [11]Dear friends, since God so loved us,[i] we also ought to love one another. [12]No one has ever seen God;[j] but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.[k]

[13]This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit.[l] [14]And we have seen and testify[m] that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.[n] [15]If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God,[o] God lives in them and they in God. [16]And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love.[p] Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.[q] [17]This is how love is made complete[r] among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. [18]There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear,[s] because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

[19]We love because he first loved us.[t] [20]Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister[u] is a liar.[v] For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen,[w] cannot love God, whom they have not seen.[x] [21]And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.[y]

4:9 [f]Jn 3:16,17; 1Jn 5:11
4:10 [g]Ro 5:8,10 [h]1Jn 2:2
4:11 [i]Jn 3:16
4:12 [j]Jn 1:18; 1Ti 6:16 [k]1Jn 2:5
4:13 [l]1Jn 3:24
4:14 [m]Jn 15:27 [n]Jn 3:17
4:15 [o]Ro 10:9
4:16 [p]ver 8 [q]1Jn 3:24
4:17 [r]1Jn 2:5
4:18 [s]Ro 8:15
4:19 [t]ver 10
4:20 [u]1Jn 2:9 [v]1Jn 2:4 [w]1Jn 3:17 [x]ver 12
4:21 [y]Mt 5:43
5:1 [z]1Jn 2:22 [a]Jn 1:13; 1Jn 2:23 [b]Jn 8:42
5:3 [c]Jn 14:15; 2Jn 6 [d]Mt 11:30
5:4 [e]Jn 16:33
5:6 [f]Jn 19:34

1Jn 5:1–5 ✣ How can we take John's teachings here on love and apply them to our minds and hearts today?

Faith in the Incarnate Son of God

5 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ[z] is born of God,[a] and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.[b] [2]This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. [3]In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands.[c] And his commands are not burdensome,[d] [4]for everyone born of God overcomes[e] the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. [5]Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

[6]This is the one who came by water and blood[f]—Jesus Christ. He did not

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revelation is found in Jesus Christ. Christ unveils God's heart; he is God, displayed vulnerably before the world.

4:11–16 Our obligation to love one another is a byproduct of God's loving generosity toward us. Our love for others reflects the divine love already showered upon us. John goes on to say that as we meet this obligation to love, we experience something unparalleled: God lives within us as his love is made complete through us. Those who obey God's commands live in him, and *he lives in them*. God's own Spirit is powerfully alive within us as we obey (3:24) and love (4:13).

4:17–19 The most immediate result of this perfect love is assurance: We will have boldness or confidence on the day of judgment. Fear and love are mutually exclusive. To fear God's character or the final judgment paralyzes us. It destroys the perfection that love offers. Knowing unequivocally that God by his Spirit resides in our lives results in unbounded confidence as we approach the day when we meet God.

4:20—5:4 John utters a divine command: "Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister" (4:21). If you love God, you will love all his children. Therefore, using a family metaphor, John is broadening the ethical challenge. This obligation springs from a profound affection for God in the first place. God has many children, and people who understand the true identity of Christ—those who love God and all his children, who obey his commands—these are people who have been born of God.

✣ 4:7—5:4 John raises a significant series of questions about spiritual confidence and certainty. How can we know we belong to God? John says the first indication is our willingness to love. John calls us to obey the command to love regardless of how we feel.

John's second suggestion is mystical. The power to know God's love in reality comes through an experience of the Holy Spirit. A vision perhaps? A Spirit-forged gift? An unexplainable resolve and peace? We don't receive this gift through intellectual exercises, but rather through immediate experience.

5:5–6b Some were teaching that the heavenly Christ descended on the man Jesus at baptism but departed before he was crucified. Hence, John says, Jesus came not only by baptismal water but also through the blood of the cross. Jesus' sacrificial death gives life: not by water only, but by water *and blood*. Life and truth can only be found when a complete incarnation embraces a genuine death on the cross.

5:6c–8 Spirit-inspired teaching will not dislodge the historic events of salvation witnessed at the cross. This witness began with the apostle John (together with the other apostles) and has been nurtured within the community of believers.

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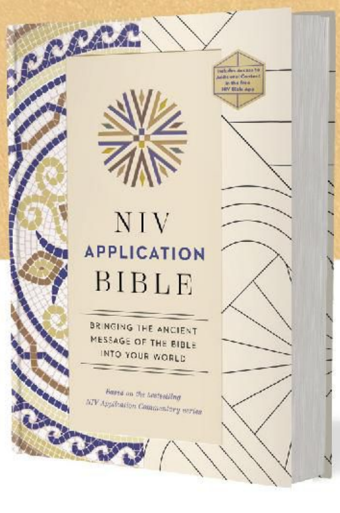
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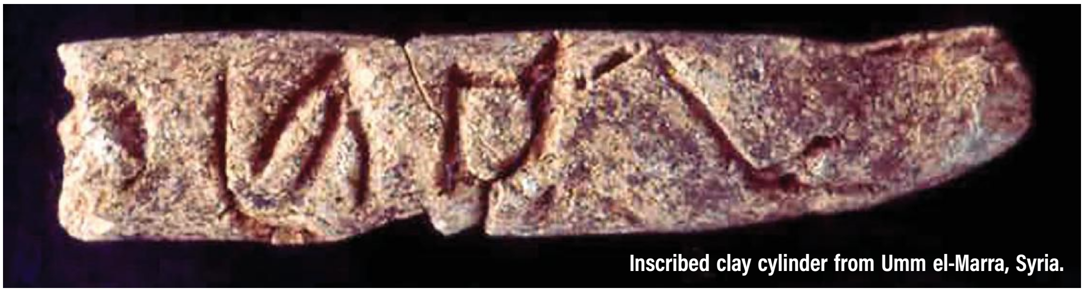

Inscribed clay cylinder from Umm el-Marra, Syria.

COURTESY GLENN SCHWARTZ, JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

Oldest Alphabetic Writing?

FOUR SMALL FINGER-LIKE clay cylinders from the ancient city of Umm el-Marra in northwestern Syria are inscribed with what may be the earliest known alphabetic writing. Discovered during excavations in 2004 by a team from Johns Hopkins University, the cylinders, which range in length from 1.5 to 2 inches, come from a securely dated archaeological context and may radically change our understanding of the emergence of the alphabet. The cylinders were found in a tomb among several burials and a variety of rich grave goods: gold and silver jewelry, intact pottery vessels, and a spearhead. Radiocarbon dating and other evidence support a firm date of 2400 to 2300 BCE for the tomb assemblage.

All four of the hollow clay tubes, which were inscribed with a simple tool such as a reed, are broken at one or both ends, suggesting that they may have been part of a longer inscription or connected to one another. Although the limited number of symbols on the cylinders makes it impossible to know what the writing means, it appears to be unrelated to earlier nonalphabetic Mesopotamian and Egyptian writing systems. Instead, it bears similarities to other early alphabetic scripts—but predates the better-known Proto-Canaanite inscriptions from Sinai by about 500 years.

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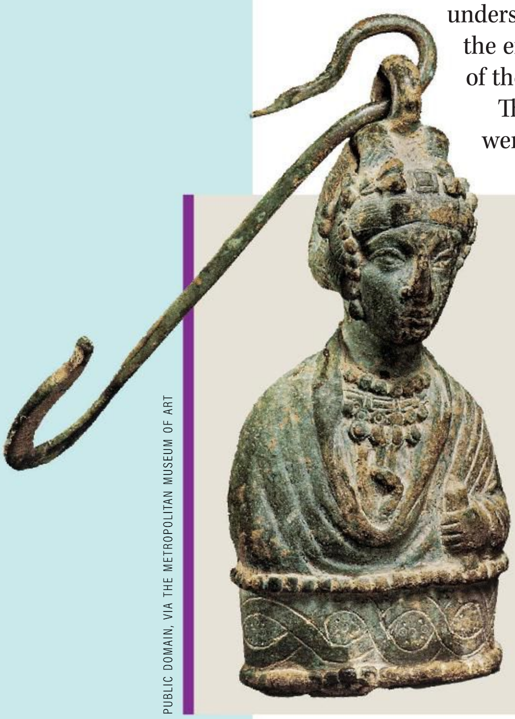


PUBLIC DOMAIN, VIA THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

WHAT IS IT?

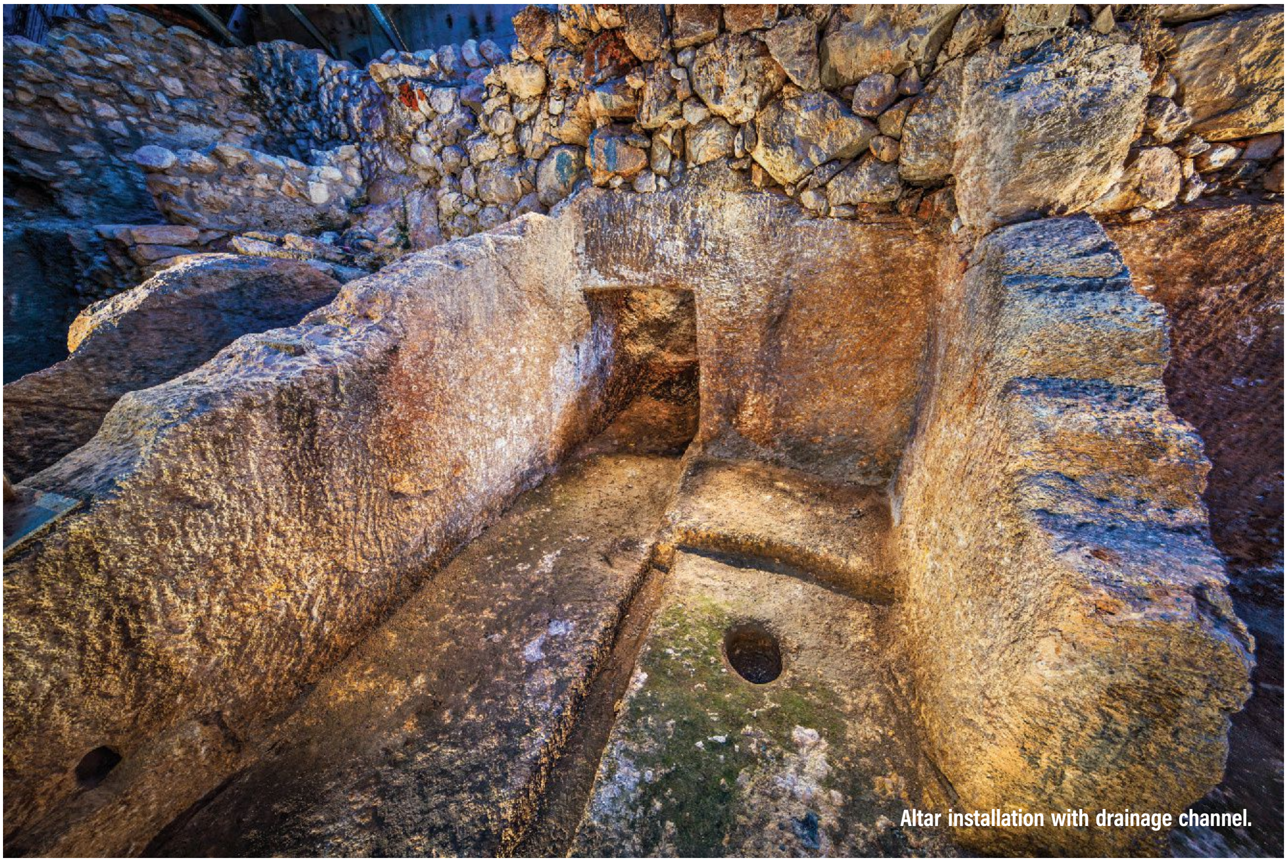
1. Ceremonial bell
2. Steelyard weight
3. Boat decoration
4. Roman fishing hook
5. Ancient Christmas ornament

ANSWER ON P. 27

WHO DID IT?

Whose studies of Levantine village life identified folklore and traditions that extended back to biblical times?

ANSWER ON P. 25



Altar installation with drainage channel.

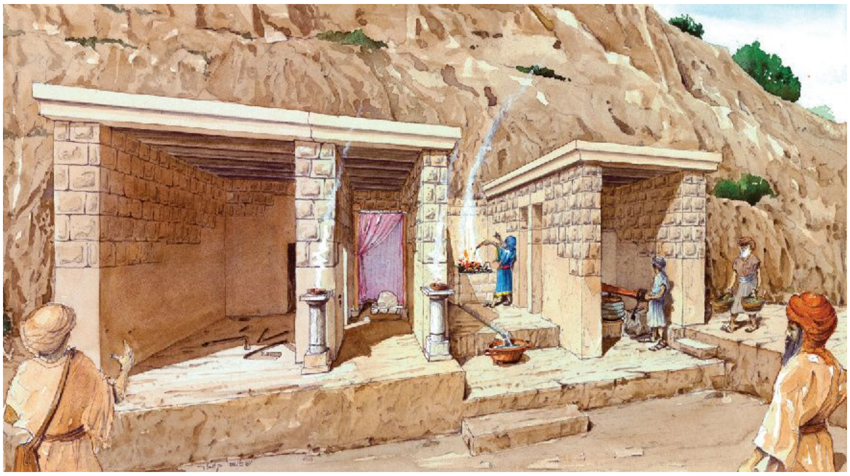
KOBI HARATI, CITY OF DAVID

Jerusalem Cult Shrine Discovered

ON THE EASTERN SLOPE of the City of David, just a few hundred yards from the ancient Temple Mount, archaeologists discovered a substantial 2,300-square-foot structure, partially carved into the rocky hillside, that appears to have been a cult shrine. Originally constructed by the end of the Middle Bronze Age (c. 1550 BCE), the site has yielded clear evidence of cultic activity well into the time of the biblical kings (c. 1000–586 BCE).

In the building's eight rock-cut rooms were several installations, including an altar, a standing stone (*massebah*) representing the deity, a winepress, and an olive press. The presses may have been used to prepare offerings to the shrine's deity. The altar installation, which included a drainage channel, may have been where sacrifices were made. Another room revealed strange V-shaped crevices carved into the floor, the purpose of which remains a mystery.

Although cult sites outside the Jerusalem Temple have been discovered in various locations throughout the biblical kingdom of Judah, such as Arad, Lachish, and Moza, the proximity of this building to the Temple Mount likely precludes the possibility that it was dedicated to the Israelite God Yahweh. Archaeologists believe the shrine went out of use in the late eighth century, coinciding with the reforms of King Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:4–5). ◼



Artist's depiction of the cult site in operation.

SHALOM KVELLER, CITY OF DAVID

Dead Sea Scrolls Shine in LA

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reaganlibrary.gov

Great Psalms Scroll fragment.

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FOR THE FIRST TIME in nearly a decade, the Dead Sea Scrolls are being exhibited in the United States, at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library & Museum. The traveling exhibition, which will also make stops in other cities across the US, is dedicated to the scrolls and their wider historical context.

The Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered between 1947 and 1956 in 11 caves near the remote site of Qumran in the Judean Desert. The collection contains the oldest known copies of almost all of the books of the Hebrew Bible as well as many nonbiblical writings. They were likely produced at Qumran—probably home to a reclusive Jewish sect between the second century BCE and the first century CE. One of the most significant archaeological discoveries of the 20th century, the scrolls are written mostly in Hebrew and are immensely important for the study of the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Judaism.

Along with two dozen Dead Sea Scrolls, the exhibit showcases more than 200 other artifacts from the Second Temple period, all on loan from Israel. Among the highlights are the Great Psalms Scroll (see photo) containing several psalms not found in the canonical Hebrew Bible; the Magdala Stone, whose sculpted decoration seems to evoke the Jerusalem Temple; a reconstruction of the Sea of Galilee Boat—a fishing boat from the time of Jesus recovered almost complete from the waters of the Sea of Galilee; and several objects from Masada, the Herodian fortress that was the final stronghold of Jewish rebels who faced the Roman army after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE.

Law and Order in Roman Judea

A NEWLY DECIPHERED PAPYRUS from the Judean Desert tells a dramatic story of forgery and fraud in the early second century, between the years 129 and 132 CE. The 133 lines of Greek text contain notes and transcripts from the Roman trial of two Jewish men, Gadalias and Saulos, who are accused of engaging in corrupt dealings involving the fraudulent sale and manumission of slaves, as well as forging business documents to conceal their activities. The text also details the criminal histories of the two men, allegedly including violence, extortion, counterfeiting, and inciting rebellion; it even suggests that the men were suspected of direct involvement in rebellious activities during Emperor Hadrian's visit to the area in 129.

"This is the best-documented Roman court case from Judea apart from the trial of Jesus," said Avner Ecker, a member of the joint Israeli-Austrian team who translated the papyrus. The document sheds direct light on Roman legal practices in Judea in the second century, illuminating the empire's ability to exercise regulatory control over private business even in remote regions distant from Rome.

For decades, the papyrus went unnoticed in the archives of the Israel Antiquities Authority, where it had been classified incorrectly as a Nabatean document. Because of this misclassification, the document's exact origin is not known, but its contents suggest that it came from Nahal Hever, where many similar papyri were found.

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Greek papyrus from the Judean Desert.

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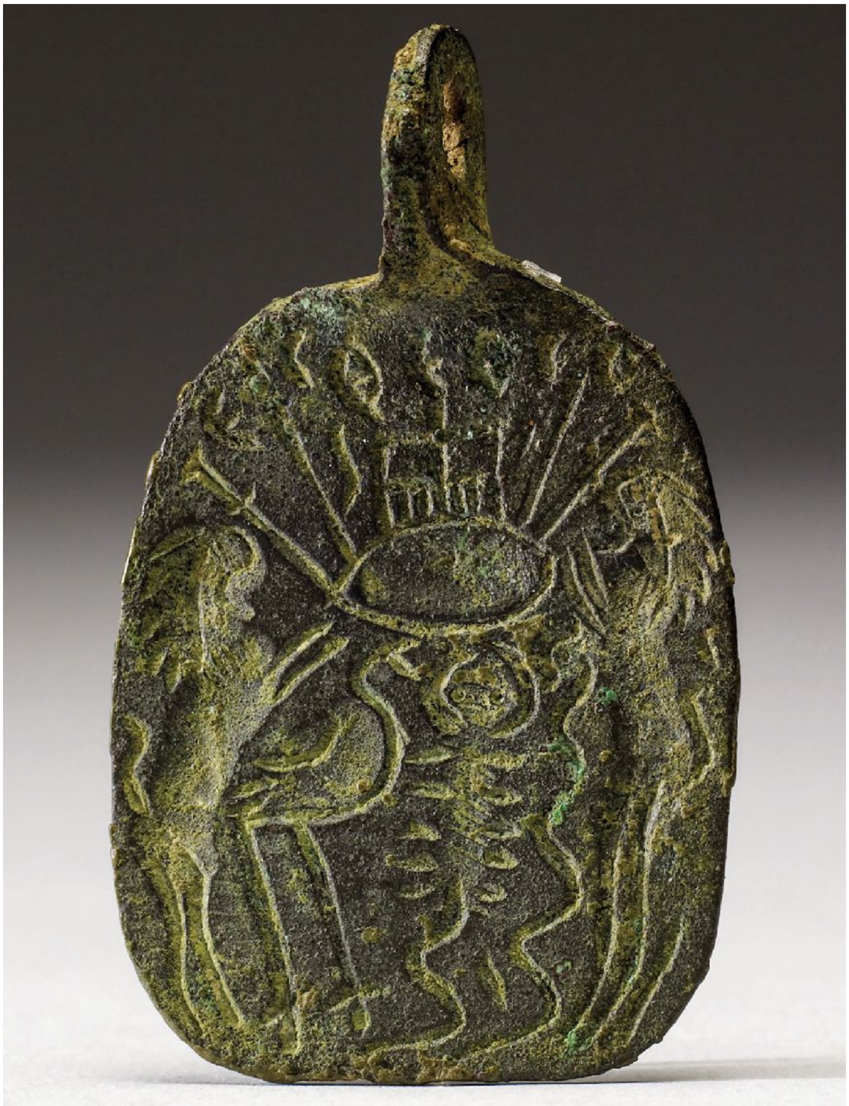
Christian Amulets in Context

MEGAN NUTZMAN

WHEN I WORKED at a church camp in college, our priests would periodically criticize campers and staff who wore blue beads around their necks. While some defended these beads as mere cultural markers that, together with the cross, identified the community to which they belonged, others acknowledged their traditional function as amulets against the evil eye. Evil-eye and other amulets have a long history, as does the criticism leveled against them by religious leaders.

The church historian Eusebius wrote around 315 CE that Christians would "not allow their sick even to do what is exceedingly common with non-Christians, to make use of charms written on leaves or amulets" (*Proof of the Gospel* 127). Later in the fourth century, John Chrysostom regularly admonished his congregation in Antioch against the use of amulets: "Have you fallen into a severe sickness, and do many come, constraining you, some with charms, some with amulets … to remedy the evil? … And would you have chosen to suffer all things rather than submit to do any of those idolatrous practices?" (*Homily 3 on 1 Thessalonians* 3). Chrysostom even acknowledged that amulets worked but insisted that it was better to die from an affliction, accepting it as a form of martyrdom, than to use an amulet to cure it.



WALTERS ART MUSEUM, 1989, CC0 1.0 UNIVERSAL

A pendant featuring the "much-suffering eye" and the Greek phrase "One God." The eye is attacked by lions, a snake, a scorpion, a stork, and spears. This amulet would protect its wearer from the evil eye.

So what kinds of amulets did Eusebius and Chrysostom have in mind? Since amulets were ubiquitous in the ancient world, these authors were familiar with many types.* Some everyday objects, such as coins, nails, and bells, could work as amulets, but we shall focus on those with texts and images inscribed on them to promote healing or protection. These amulets fall into two broad groups depending on their size.

Larger amulets were written on papyrus, parchment, or thin sheets of metal (*lamellae*). Their size allowed for lengthy texts that typically called upon one or more divine healers and that were personalized for a specific user, with their name and the purpose stated. They were then rolled or folded and placed in a small case to be worn on the body.

Smaller amulets took the forms of rings, pendants, armbands, or gemstones. Their limited surface area could accommodate only a handful of words and was more conducive to the use of powerful images. For example, a late antique brass ring found at Hammat Gader in the southern Golan bears the Greek inscription, "Christ, help Andreas." This ring represents a prayer in material form. And although the prayer itself would have been unremarkable to early Christian leaders, Chrysostom was resolute that even these objects were forbidden to Christians.

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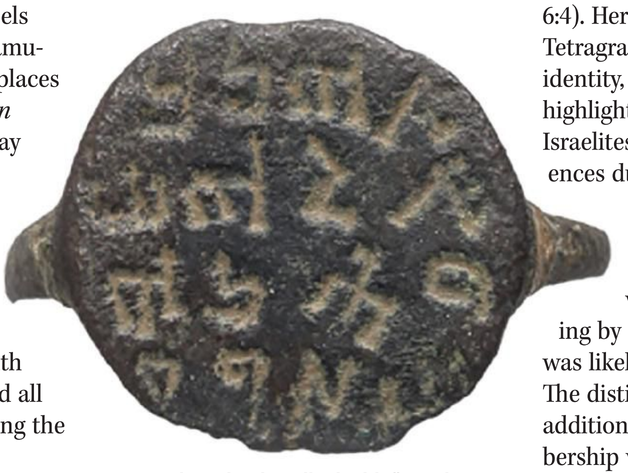
* For Christian amulets in general, see Theodore de Bruyn, "Christian Amulets—A Bit of Old, a Bit of New," **BAR**, September/October 2018.

Elsewhere, Chrysostom mentions that Christians use the Gospels as an amulet: "Do you not see how women and little children suspend Gospels from their necks as a powerful amulet, and carry them about in all places wherever they go?" (*Homily 19 on the Statues* 14). This reference may reflect a practice that we see in longer amulets, where the first words of each Gospel, called the *incipit,* were quoted.*

An example of a gospel *incipit* amulet is Berlin P. 6096, a slip of parchment inscribed with excerpts from several psalms and all four Gospels, with a cross marking the beginning of each passage:

> † In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. One who dwells in the help of the most high will abide in the shelter of the lord of heaven. [Psalm 91:1] † In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. This was in the beginning with God. [John 1:1–2] … [Matthew 1:1; Mark 1:1; Luke 1:1; Psalm 118:6–7; 18:2] † The lord Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity. [Matthew 4:23] † The body and the blood of Christ, spare your servant who wears this amulet. Amen, Alleluia † Α † Ω †.[1]

Like the simple ring amulet for Andreas, this parchment amulet is wholly Christian, with most of the text coming directly from the Christian Bible. The only extra-biblical language appears at the beginning and end, framing the biblical passages and invoking liturgical formulae. Nevertheless, the thoroughly Christian character of Berlin P. 6096 would not have exempted it from disapproval by some early Christian authors who rejected similar scriptural amulets for their similarity to Jewish *tefillin* (*phylakteria*, in Greek). In Matthew 23, Jesus criticizes what he characterizes as the ostentatious way that some Jews wore *tefillin*, in a passage that would influence how later Christians interpreted this Jewish ritual practice. In his criticism of gospel amulets, Jerome, the famous translator of the Bible, states that "superstitious little women who keep doing this up to the present day with little Gospels" continue the criticized practice of the Pharisees, who "did not understand that these things need to be carried in the heart, not in the body" (*Commentary on Matthew* 23:5–7).



A Samaritan ring inscribed with "O Jeshurun, there is none like God [Deuteronomy 33:26], praised be He!"

INSET: THE ISRAEL MUSEUM, JERUSALEM; PHOTO BY LAURA LACHMAN

Despite Jerome's protestations, the practice of wearing biblical passages on amulets remained widespread, and not just among Christians. Samaritans, too, used pendant and ring amulets inscribed with short biblical passages to recall longer texts, often featuring the Tetragrammaton. A bronze Samaritan pendant found near Tel Aviv and dated to the second half of the fourth century contains Exodus 15:3, with the first half of the verse, "YHWH is a warrior," included twice, followed by the second half of the verse, "YHWH is his name." The back side quotes from three separate verses: "Arise, YHWH" (Numbers 10:35), "There is none like God, O Jeshurun" (Deuteronomy 33:26), and "YHWH alone" (Deuteronomy 6:4). Here, the fivefold repetition of the Tetragrammaton emphasizes God's identity, and the selected passages highlight his special relationship to the Israelites and their formative experiences during the Exodus.

Since there is nothing but biblical quotations on this amulet, we do not know why someone wore it. Judging by other late antique amulets, it was likely for protection or healing. The distinctive Samaritan script could additionally mark the wearer's membership within the Samaritan community, much like the blue bead for some today. Wearing these biblical passages might have also been seen as fulfilling the command in Deuteronomy 6 to "bind" God's words on the body, similar to how late antique Jews understood *tefillin*.

The surviving amulets and the critiques leveled against them by religious elites indicate that the practice was very common among late antique Christians. The similarities between Christian amulets and those worn by their non-Christian neighbors, together with criticism of Jewish *tefillin*, suggest that opposition to amulets may have been rooted in a perceived porousness of boundaries that separated Christian ritual practices from those of outsiders.[2]

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* For incipit amulets, see Joseph E. Sanzo, "Ancient Amulets with Incipits: The Blurred Line Between Magic and Religion," *Bible History Daily* (blog), October 2, 2015.

[1] Marvin Meyer and Richard Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1999), no. 9.

[2] For a detailed treatment, see my book *Contested Cures: Identity and Ritual Healing in Roman and Late Antique Palestine* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2022).

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Clinton Bailey (1936–2025)

ETHNOGRAPHER CLINTON BAILEY devoted his life to the Bedouin of the Negev and Sinai. Throughout his career, he documented their lives and advocated for their futures. But for readers of **BAR**, just as significant was the attention he paid to the past.

Born Irwin Glaser in Buffalo, New York, Bailey made his way to Israel in the late 1950s. He completed his undergraduate work in Jerusalem and then returned to New York to do a Ph.D. in Middle East studies at Columbia University. In the late 1960s, he moved back to Israel, where he became fascinated by the Negev's Bedouin. Bailey spent weeks on end traveling with various tribes, documenting tribal discussions, collecting proverbs, and recording songs.

Bailey was also concerned with how Bedouin culture informs the Bible.* He didn't think the Bible came from a Bedouin-like society, but rather that the biblical writers were appealing to formerly nomadic Israelites in an attempt to incorporate them into their semi-urbanized society. He focused, for example, on aspects of biblical law that are illuminated by the tribe and tribal justice in Bedouin society. He also studied the Exodus wanderings against the realities of life in the desert, and the ways in which biblical poetry parallels themes from Bedouin songs.

Bailey left behind a scholarly legacy comprising detailed knowledge about Bedouin society, values, and practices. There is much biblical scholars can learn if they turn their attention to his work and think creatively about how it can help make sense of biblical history, literature, and culture.—**AARON KOLLER**

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* Clinton Bailey, "How Desert Culture Helps Us Understand the Bible," *Bible Review*, August 1991.

Ze'ev Meshel (1932–2024)

Ze'ev Meshel, renowned archaeologist and passionate desert explorer, passed away on December 14, 2024. He was 92 years old.

Meshel was born in Tel Aviv to parents who had immigrated from Poland. After his military service, he pursued his studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In 1974, he completed his doctoral thesis at Tel Aviv University on the history of the Negev during Israel's monarchic period, which marked the beginning of a distinguished career. He then joined the university's department of archaeology, where he taught until his retirement in the early 2000s.

Meshel's focus was the Negev and Sinai regions, where he conducted surveys and excavations that shed light on the role of these arid landscapes as hubs of trade, cultural exchange, and human adaptation. He explored ancient water systems, desert fortresses, caravan routes, and agricultural practices, uncovering the resilience and ingenuity of the people who thrived in these challenging environments.

Among his achievements, the excavation of Kuntillet ʿAjrud in the northeastern Sinai is his most renowned work (see below). This remote Iron Age site yielded inscriptions, artistic representations, and artifacts that continue to challenge conventional understandings of religion, literacy, and trade in the kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

PHOTO BY AVRAHAM IZDAREKHET, COURTESY THE FAMILY OF ZE'EV MESHEL

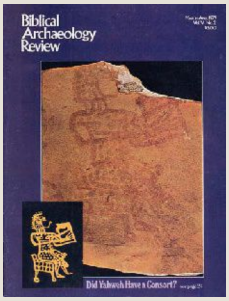
Meshel's legacy is one of uncovering truths about the past while fostering a deep connection to the land and its stories. His contributions to the study of the Negev and Sinai have left an indelible mark on the field of archaeology, and his dedication to understanding and preserving history will continue to inspire future generations.—**LILY SINGER-AVITZ**

For the extended tributes, please visit **barmag.org/milestones**.

50 YEARS FLASH BACK

1979: Ze'ev Meshel Covers Kuntillet ʿAjrud

BAR's March/April 1979 cover story, "Did Yahweh Have a Consort?" by Ze'ev Meshel, was the first-ever detailed, color-illustrated article about the remarkable finds from Kuntillet ʿAjrud. This remote desert outpost from the eighth century BCE produced a treasure trove of inscriptions and drawings—including the fascinating lyre player gracing the issue's cover—that provided tantalizing clues about the realities of Israelite religion. Over the next five decades, Kuntillet ʿAjrud came to be one of the most frequently discussed sites in **BAR**.



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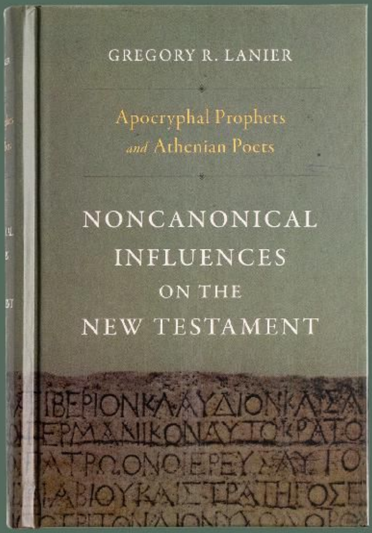

GREGORY R. LANIER

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Exploring Jesus's Hometown

JAMES R. STRANGE

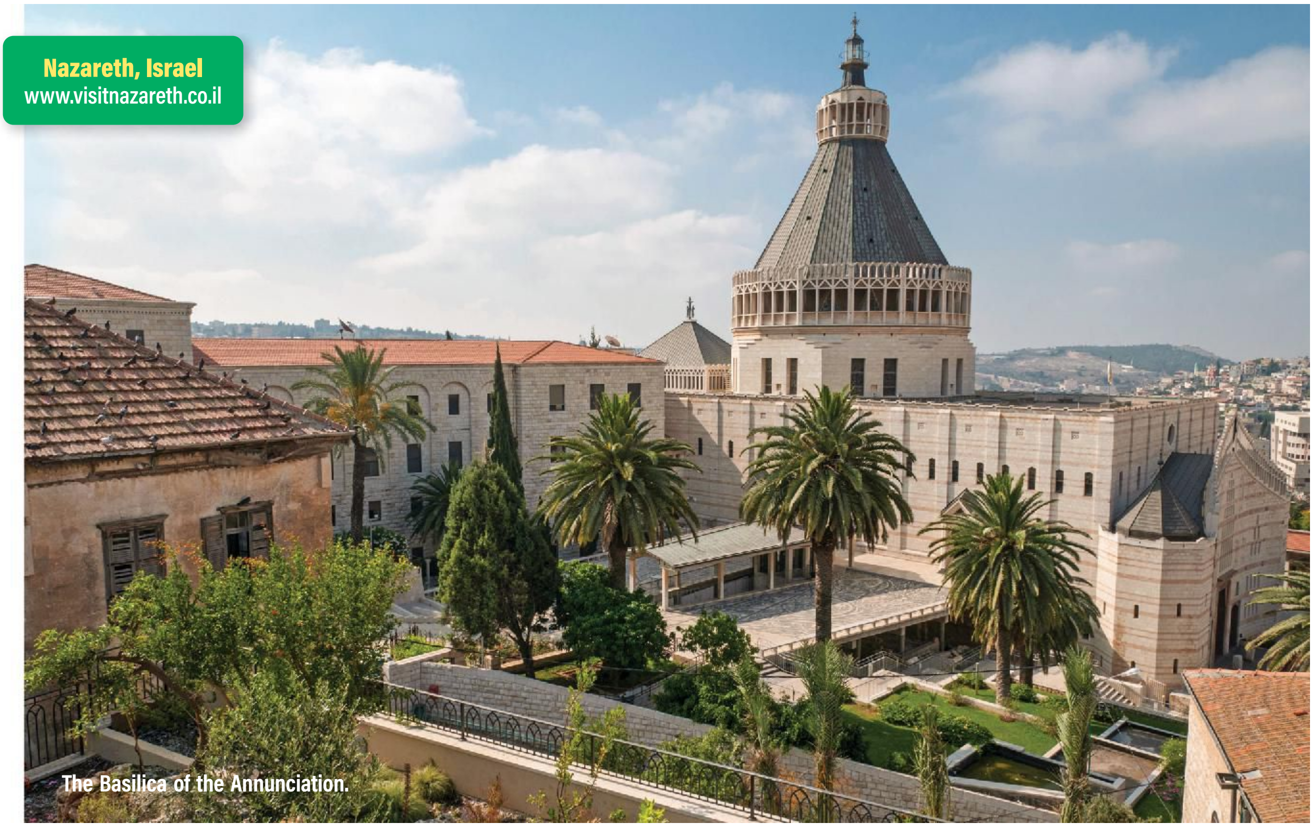
IN THE EARLY FIRST CENTURY CE, Jesus's hometown of Nazareth was a Galilean village like most others. With a population probably numbering only in the hundreds, it was much smaller than neighboring Yafia and was dwarfed by nearby Sepphoris, one of the Galilee's wealthiest and most prosperous cities at the time.

Nazareth today is a very different place. With a population of nearly 80,000, it is one of the largest cities in northern Israel, but residents are packed into just a few square miles of close-set houses built along steep, narrow streets. Around 70 percent of Nazareth's residents are Muslim and 30 percent are Christian (primarily Latin and Greek Catholics and Greek Orthodox), while Jews make up the bulk of the population of the adjacent city of Nof HaGalil. Thanks to this diversity, Nazareth has become well known for its tolerance, with Muslim sheikhs and boy scouts marching in the annual Christmas Eve parade, church bishops and Christian boy scouts participating in the parade on the Islamic holiday of Eid al-Fitr, and many Jewish families from Nof HaGalil filling Nazareth's restaurants on Friday evenings.

Many who visit Nazareth, of course, come to see sites and places associated with the life of Jesus. Outside of the New Testament, however, Nazareth is rarely mentioned in ancient and medieval sources. It does not appear in the Hebrew Bible, Apocrypha, Josephus, or early rabbinic writings, and receives no mention in the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, which contains stories about Jesus's childhood, or the *Protevangelium of James*, which tells of Mary's childhood. We have a late fourth-century report that Emperor Constantine granted permission for a church to be built in Nazareth, and between the fourth and ninth centuries, Christian pilgrims visited a cave that was identified with Mary's house, as well as various churches identified with the site of the annunciation, the home of Joseph, Jesus's childhood home, and the synagogue where Jesus learned his ABCs.

Thanks to these long-venerated spaces, today there is much to see nestled among Nazareth's sweet shops (the city is famous for them), falafel stands, and clothing boutiques. Let's take a walking tour through the city's many historic and cultural sites.

We begin at the Basilica of the Annunciation, whose black cupola makes it the most visible building in the city. Constructed in part to preserve earlier holy spaces, the current structure was built in the 1960s following the demolition of an earlier church that dated to the first half of the 18th century. Between demolition and construction,



Nazareth, Israel
www.visitnazareth.co.il

The Basilica of the Annunciation.

EITAN SIMANOR/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Mary's Well in downtown Nazareth.

DUBY TAL/ALBATROSS/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

archaeologists conducted extensive excavations.

The present church preserves the outline of the 12th-century Crusader church. Beneath an octagon in the floor, we can see into the "lower church" that contains the apse of a fifth-century Byzantine monastery church adjacent to a grotto that Catholic tradition continues to venerate as the site of the archangel Gabriel's annunciation to Mary (Luke 1:26–38). Elsewhere on the church grounds, archaeologists uncovered the remains of house walls, oil presses, storage chambers, and silos from the first-century village. Just to the north is St. Joseph's Church, which was built in the 17th century over a cave that supposedly was the site of the village's carpenter shop.

Next we head to Nazareth's old *suq* (market), where visitors can shop for souvenirs amid a maze of narrow streets, shop stalls, and restaurants. If time allows, we'll walk through Elbabour, the spice market that occupies the old 18th-century community mill. The stone grinders were first turned by horses, then by steam and diesel engines. Until the late 1960s, local farmers brought their grain here to be processed.

After a *café hafukh* (Hebrew for "upside-down coffee," since the espresso is poured into steamed milk), we continue on to the Greek Orthodox Church of St. Gabriel, where the Eastern Orthodox tradition has commemorated the site of the annunciation since at least the 12th century. Located just a few hundred feet south of the church is Mary's Well, one of the city's best-known landmarks. It is probably the place identified in some apocryphal sources, including the *Protevangelium of James*, as the site of Gabriel's appearance to Mary. The well, which is fed by a nearby spring (one of the few in the Galilee), supplied the village with fresh water as early as the Byzantine period, although it went out of use in the 1990s and now primarily serves as a gathering spot for both locals and tourists enjoying the city's downtown.

Also worth a stop is Nazareth Village, the Galilee's answer to Colonial Williamsburg. On a hillside located between Nazareth Hospital and the YMCA, characters in period dress herd goats, thresh wheat, card wool, weave fabric, and crush olives in a reconstructed first-century Jewish village built according to ancient methods. The park provides an opportunity to test the efficiency of first-century industries and building techniques while also trying out foods imagined to be like those eaten by Galileans 2,000 years ago.

Rounding out our trip, we make our way to the so-called Synagogue Church, purported to be the location of the synagogue where Jesus first learned the Torah, although no first-century synagogue has been uncovered there. We will also make quick photo stops at the Gothic revival Church of Jesus the Adolescent, built on the high hill to the west of Nazareth, which is a wonderful spot to overlook the modern city, and then Mt. Precipice, which offers a commanding, panoramic view over the lush Jezreel Valley. Local tradition identifies this as the peak where the residents of Nazareth tried to hurl Jesus to his death (Luke 4:28–30), but he was able to leap to safety onto the peak of nearby Mt. Tabor.

Nazareth is easily reached by car from many of northern Israel's cities, including Tiberias and Haifa, or if coming from the south, is about a two-hour drive from Jerusalem. Given its central location, Nazareth also serves as a wonderful base to tour other archaeological sites in the Galilee and the north, including Sepphoris, Beth Shearim, and Megiddo, or, with just a little more driving, Beth Shean and sites around the Sea of Galilee to the east. In the temperate fall and spring months, hikers will want to try out sections of the Jesus Trail and the Sanhedrin Trail, both of which traverse the Lower Galilee and pass through or in close proximity to Nazareth.

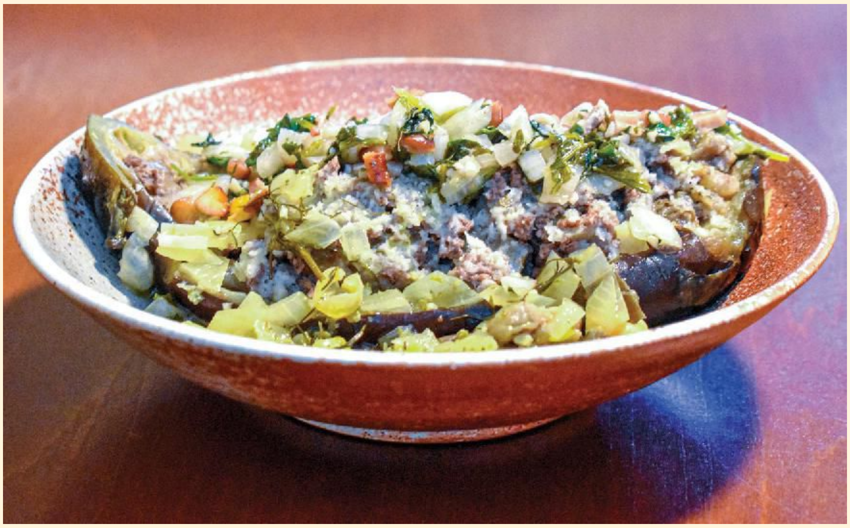
Iberian Stuffed Eggplants

The *Kitāb al-ṭabīẖ* ("Book of Cooking") is a 13th-century collection of recipes from the Iberian Peninsula. It is the oldest recipe collection from Spain, specifically the Andalusian region, and dates to the time of Islamic rule. The text is written in Arabic, but at least six recipes are marked as Jewish, and others may contain hints of Jewish influence—a noteworthy fact given that the text was written during a time of intercommunal and religious tensions. The book's author is unknown, but they were clearly familiar with both Islamic and Jewish dietary laws and customs.

This recipe for a Jewish dish is straightforward and requires only two adjustments. First, the recipe calls for etrog or lemon leaves, which can be hard to find. An equal amount of lemon zest can be used as a substitute.

Second, the recipe calls for rue. This herb can be hard to acquire and, in some cases, should be avoided. It is dangerous for pregnant women, can cause rashes, and is poisonous in large doses. It is extremely bitter, so fenugreek or dandelion greens would be a good substitute, though I chose to omit it entirely.

This communal dish is meant to be plated and enjoyed at a large gathering. So grab some friends and family and enjoy our culinary trip into the Iberian past.—J.D.



JOHN DRUMMOND, BAS

BAR's Recipe

Eggplant and Filling

5 small or medium eggplants
½ lb ground meat (beef or lamb)
1 tsp salt
1 tsp pepper
2 ½ tsp cinnamon
2 egg whites
1 cup breadcrumbs

Pot 1

2 tbsp olive oil
¼ cup onions, minced
2 cloves garlic, chopped
½ tsp ginger, ground
½ cup cilantro, chopped
½ tsp salt
½ tsp rosewater
1 tbsp pine nuts
1 tbsp etrog or lemon leaves (or lemon zest)
1 tbsp mint leaves, chopped
¼ cup water

Pot 2

2 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp vinegar
1 onion, minced
1 clove garlic, chopped
½ tsp ground ginger
3 sprigs of oregano
3 strands of rue, fenugreek, or dandelion greens (optional)
½ tbsp etrog or lemon leaves (or lemon zest)
¼ cup fennel tips
1 tbsp chopped almonds
½ cup cooked chickpeas
2 saffron strands
4 cups water
3 egg yolks, hard boiled and chopped

Instructions

1. Cook the eggplants in salted boiling water for 20 minutes. Once they cool, cut them in half (lengthwise). Hollow out each half (save the innards), making sure not to damage the skin.
2. Combine the meat, salt, pepper, cinnamon, egg whites, and remaining eggplant flesh in a large bowl. Fill the eggplant skins with this mixture and top with breadcrumbs.
3. For steps 4–5, divide the remaining ingredients between two pots, one small and one large.
4. In the smaller pot, add the "Pot 1" ingredients and cook uncovered over low heat for 10 minutes.
5. In the larger pot, add the "Pot 2" ingredients (minus the egg yolks) and then place the stuffed eggplants on top. Cover and cook over medium heat for 20 minutes. Garnish with the egg yolks and black pepper.
6. Bring both pots to the table. Serve the eggplants from the larger pot, and then pour the sauce from the smaller pot on top of each serving.

For detailed directions, visit **barmag.org/eggplant**.

ASOR Turns 125!

COURTESY OF THE ALBRIGHT INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Gate to the Albright Institute in Jerusalem.

ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-FIVE years ago, the "American School of Oriental Study and Research in Palestine" was established in Jerusalem. In 1921, it was incorporated in the United States and began to use the name American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR), which in 2021 was renamed the American Society of Overseas Research, maintaining the familiar acronym.

ASOR has been on the forefront of American research efforts in the Near East and wider Mediterranean world, leading archaeological excavations, publishing research, and sponsoring fellowships and public programs. After the Jerusalem school opened, additional centers were founded, each with a particular focus and mission: the Baghdad school (1923, closed in 1969), the American Center of Research (ACOR) in Amman, Jordan (1968), and the Cyprus American Archaeological Research Institute (CAARI) in Nicosia, Cyprus (1978). Today, these centers are all independent organizations, though some maintain their ASOR affiliation.

In 1919, ASOR launched the academic journal *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*. Two other journals with specific purview were established later: *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* and *Ma'arav*. For more general audiences, ASOR publishes the semi-popular *Near Eastern Archaeology* (formerly *The Biblical Archaeologist*).

ASOR's Jerusalem school, renamed the W.F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in 1970 for its former director, is also celebrating 125 years, while its East Jerusalem headquarters, completed in 1925, is celebrating a centennial this year (see p. 24).

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5 QUESTIONS

The New Face of the Albright

For more than a century, the W.F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research has been the leading American research center in Jerusalem. Some of biblical archaeology's most notable scholars—William F. Albright, Nelson Glueck, and William Dever, among others—have served as its director. **James Fraser**, who became the Albright director in October 2023, is a former British Museum curator and a specialist in the Bronze Age Levant. BAR recently spoke with Fraser about his appointment and what he enjoys most about being the institute's director.

COURTESY JAMES FRASER

What is the Albright Institute and how does it support archaeology in Israel?

Fraser: The Albright Institute supports American scholars working in the region. In fact, this year marks the Albright's 100th year serving this mission from our iconic stone building in Jerusalem (see p. 23). Each year, the Albright hosts a fellowship program of American and international researchers from many fields of the humanities, especially archaeology and biblical studies, and these fellows come and live at the Albright to study in our library. The institute also serves as a base for archaeological teams visiting Israel, and we help connect them with local scholars and institutions. Most important, our fellowship program, married with a program of public lectures, workshops, and tours, pulls a wide spectrum of people to the Albright to form a dynamic academic community like no other in the city.

Does the Albright Institute have its own projects?

Fraser: The institute is named after one of its first directors, William F. Albright, who pioneered the development of archaeology in the southern Levant. In the 1920s and '30s, Albright conducted archaeological excavations on behalf of the institute at key sites such as Tell Beit Mirsim. That tradition was continued by subsequent directors who led excavations at Tel Miqne (Seymour Gitin) and and at Legio as part of the Jezreel Valley Regional Project (Matthew Adams). I run a field project excavating a 5,000-year-old olive oil factory in northern Jordan, although I'm sitting on my troweling hand until I publish the first three seasons of excavation.

However, the institute has plenty of other projects to keep me busy. For example, Albright's granddaughter and great-granddaughter recently donated an astounding archive of Albright's personal effects, including photographs, film negatives, and hundreds of letters that he wrote to his mother during his time in Jerusalem. This is a phenomenally rich resource for researchers investigating the development of archaeology in the region. We're hoping to digitize, transcribe, and share the archive online so that researchers all over the world can access this resource.

Megalithic Bronze Age dolmens in the Golan Heights.

TODD BOLEN/BIBLEPLACES.COM

How did your experience at the British Museum prepare you for your job at the Albright?

Fraser: One of the roles I enjoyed most at the British Museum was engaging with museums across the world. For example, for one of the exhibits I curated, we managed to procure some high-level objects on loan from the national museums of Armenia and Bulgaria. I loved forging links with international colleagues. In Jerusalem, the Albright is a renowned international institution. Making such links with other international actors, and with different Israeli, Palestinian, and other international organizations, is a key aspect of the job.

①②③④⑤

You're an expert on ancient dolmens. What are dolmens, and why should we study them?

Fraser: A dolmen is a table-like monument built from two vertical megalithic slabs with a horizontal slab placed across the top. Dolmens emerged as monumental traditions in different places at different times and for different purposes. In the southern Levant, dolmens were built in the first part of the Bronze Age (c. 3700–3000 BCE) as funerary monuments under which families would place their dead over several generations. By studying dolmens, we learn about burial traditions during a significant period when people went from living in small towns to major cities. More important, we learn about the relationship between people and their landscape, as dolmens were constructed as visible monuments that were meant to be seen.

①②③④⑤

What do you enjoy most about being Albright director?

Fraser: Right now, I am super excited to celebrate the Albright's 100th anniversary. These celebrations mark an astonishingly successful, long-term American commitment to scholarship in the region, and they signal our intent to be here for the next hundred to come. But, in general, the best thing about being the director of the Albright is that the research interests of our fellows become my own, as I get to hear all about their research, help them connect with local scholars, and arrange trips to see relevant archaeological sites. Yesterday, I visited the renewed Iron Age excavations at Tell Beit Mirsim; in a few weeks, we will go visit the Chalcolithic excavations at Ein Gedi near the Dead Sea. And this year's lecture series includes topics on just about everything in between. It's an exhilarating job, and I love every minute of it.

For the full interview with James Fraser, visit **barmag.org/fraser**.

WHO DID IT? (SEE QUIZ ON P. 12)

Answer: Tawfiq Canaan

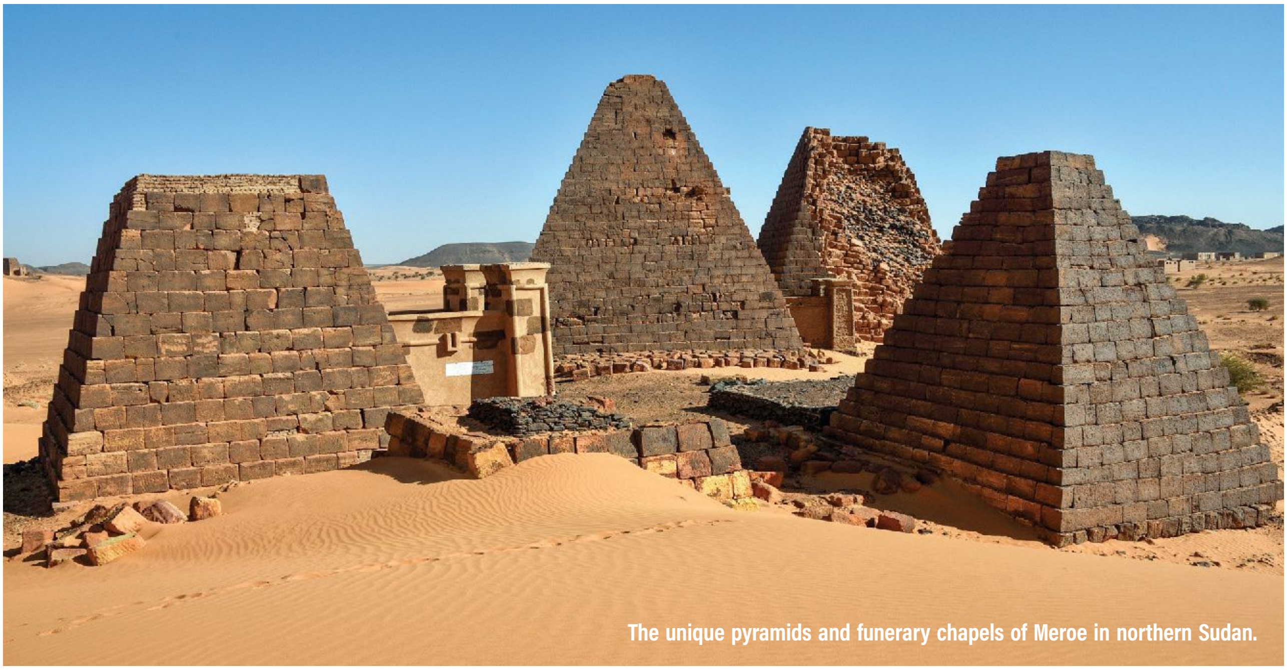
Tawfiq Canaan (1882–1964) was a Palestinian physician who spent his career in Jerusalem. He was a gifted and prolific medical researcher, authoring nearly 40 studies ranging from tuberculosis and malaria to health conditions in Palestine; he also contributed to research that led to a cure for leprosy.

Parallel to his medical career, however, Canaan was deeply engaged in the study of Palestinian folk traditions and culture, producing several books and more than 50 articles in this field. He stood at the heart of an intellectual circle that understood rural communities to be the inheritors of the region's cultural legacy dating back to pre-biblical times. Publishing regularly in the *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* in the 1920s and '30s, Canaan developed a rich, vibrant, and sensitive body of knowledge about the beliefs and traditions of the residents of the southern Levant that he believed was essential to understanding the earlier Canaanite, Israelite, Philistine, Nabatean, Aramean, and Arab inhabitants of the region.

Canaan's upbringing was steeped in the German Lutheran tradition; his father, the first Arab pastor for the German Protestant Palestine Mission, founded the first Lutheran church, YMCA, and co-ed school in their home village of Beit Jala, near Jerusalem. Thanks in part to this background, Canaan was able to maintain close ties with European intellectuals over the course of his career, including biblical scholars such as Albrecht Alt, Martin Noth, and his lifelong friend, archaeologist William F. Albright, who headed the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem during the 1920s.

Portrait of Tawfiq Canaan dated between 1905 and 1920.

PUBLIC DOMAIN, VIA THE UNITED STATES LIBRARY OF CONGRESS / PHOTO: G. KRIKORIAN



The unique pyramids and funerary chapels of Meroe in northern Sudan.

AGF SRI/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Cush in the Crosshairs

OFTEN OVERSHADOWED by the grandeur of ancient Egypt, the land of Cush in modern-day northern Sudan was no less impressive in its cultural achievements. From at least the third millennium BCE, the Cushites grew wealthy and powerful from the region's rich mineral deposits, especially gold, as well as their control over strategic trade routes that linked sub-Saharan Africa with the Nile Valley. Although Egypt's pharaohs partially occupied this rich land through much of the second millennium, the kings of Cush became the Nile's dominant power in the mid-first millennium, even conquering Egypt in the eighth century BCE to become its 25th Dynasty (see p. 42). Cush continued to play a major role in Egyptian and Mediterranean affairs for the next thousand years.

But this land, which famously boasts twice as many pyramids as Egypt (more than 200!), is today caught in the crosshairs of a widespread and brutal conflict that has ravaged Sudan for more than two years. Warring factions of Sudan's military leadership, namely the Rapid Support Forces militia and the vestiges of the Sudanese army, have devastated the country in their struggle for power. As many as 150,000 have died in the fighting, while more than 12 million Sudanese have been displaced and more than half of the country faces starvation, making it one of the world's largest humanitarian crises.

As the war has dragged on, the country's archaeology has suffered greatly. In March, when the army recaptured the Sudanese capital of Khartoum from militia forces, experts found that the national museum, which housed the world's largest collection of Cushite objects, had been completely sacked and looted by the militia. Many fear the museum's priceless treasures have been trafficked out of the country. There have also been sporadic militia raids near Meroe, a UNESCO World Heritage site south of Khartoum that was the royal and religious center of the Cushite kings during the Hellenistic and Roman periods (third century BCE–fourth century CE). Moreover, the ongoing violence has displaced many of the country's archaeologists, heritage professionals, and museum staff, limiting the Sudanese government's ability to monitor and protect threatened sites and museums in certain parts of the country.

But even as many of Sudan's state institutions have had to limit their operations or temporarily relocate to Port Sudan or Cairo, local communities have stepped in to safeguard archaeological sites. Often with the support of international organizations, communities have taken it upon themselves to monitor and guard sites threatened by looting, lack of maintenance, and highly damaging seasonal flooding. In addition, with so much of Sudan's population fleeing war-torn areas for the relative safety of the country's north, once-well-protected archaeological treasures such as Meroe (above) and Jebel Barkal (p. 42) are facing significant new risks, including potential vandalism, overcrowding, and encroachment of new buildings and temporary housing. To counter these threats, communities are working to raise awareness among new arrivals about their area's cultural heritage, train local guards and guides who can advocate for site protection, and properly excavate remains uncovered during new building or looting activities.—**G.J.C.**

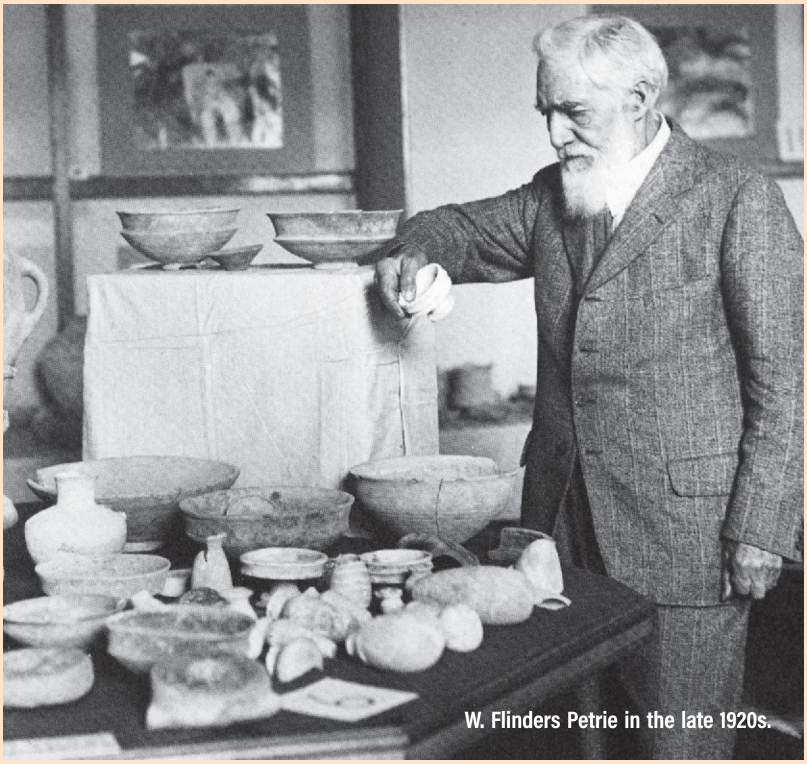
Seriation

Determining when an object or artifact was created is one of the main concerns of archaeology. Among the earliest techniques used to date ancient artifacts is seriation, which assumes that specific types of material culture evolve over time, changing their form, manufacturing techniques, and decorative styles. Seriation analyzes and compares artifacts of a particular type and places them into chronologically ordered series.

Dating based on seriation does not provide absolute dates but rather indicates where an artifact belongs relative to other artifacts of a given type. Known also as artifact sequencing, seriation is thus a technique for establishing a relative chronology. However, when the same archaeological layer contains a datable object (e.g., coins or dated inscriptions) or can be linked to a securely dated event (e.g., a historical battle), these objects then become chronological anchors.

This dating technique was first developed in the late 19th century by the founding father of modern archaeology, William Flinders Petrie (1853–1942), during his excavations at predynastic sites in Upper Egypt and at the site of Tell el-Hesi, now in southern Israel.

Seriation is most readily useful for dating pottery and provides the best results in combination with methods of absolute dating, such as radiocarbon and archaeomagnetic analyses (see p. 56). Today, seriation is generally run by computers, which can handle astronomically large volumes of data when looking for patterns and arranging them into sequences.


W. Flinders Petrie in the late 1920s.

PETRIE MUSEUM OF EGYPTIAN ARCHAEOLOGY, UCL / SCIENCE PHOTO LIBRARY

WHAT IS IT? (SEE QUIZ ON P. 12)

Answer: ② Steelyard weight

This substantial weight, 9.5 inches tall and weighing about 5 pounds, may depict an empress of the Theodosian Dynasty, who ruled the Byzantine Empire from 379 to 450 CE. Shaping such a weight into the bust of an empress was a common Byzantine practice, especially during the fifth to seventh centuries.

The woman holds a scroll in her left hand, while her right hand is just visible on the inside of her robe. Her hairstyle, with braids looped up on the sides of her head, reflects a style popular in late antiquity. She wears a heavily bejeweled diadem and necklace. The bust sits on a large plinth that serves as the base of the weight.

The quality of this piece is particularly noteworthy, with a rare degree of detail and sensitivity in the depiction of the face, hair, jewelry, and clothing. The eyes exhibit a realism that is usually not seen in the vacant gazes of other such weights.

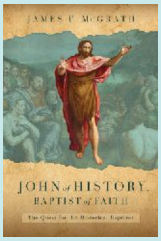
The weight would have been used in conjunction with a steelyard, a long metal arm that was ruled with weight markings along its length. A commodity would be hung at one end, and on the other end the weight could be moved along the ruled section to create balance, thereby establishing the weight and value of the commodity.

The Quest for John the Baptist

REVIEW BY **ZEBA CROOK**

IN A STYLE THAT IS EASY TO READ, James F. McGrath has undertaken this study into the historical John the Baptist in the true spirit of scientific inquiry: It is daring, creative, and exploratory. As with all novel scientific experiments, however, value is not always measured in terms of success but rather learning, for one can learn as much from a failed experiment as from a successful one.

In terms of goals, McGrath is emphatically not attempting a biography of the historical John the Baptist. Rather, he is interested in exploring the challenges and possibilities of such an undertaking. As such, this book is structured around topics related to the search for John, not around topics related to his life or chronology, though McGrath does in the process make many claims about what we can know about John (all of them interesting, some of them provocative, and many of them unpersuasive).



John of History, Baptist of Faith
The Quest for the Historical Baptizer
By James F. McGrath
(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2024), 486 pp., $59.99 (hardcover and eBook)

In the book's nine chapters, McGrath successively argues that John the Baptist is as central to the New Testament's Q source (a hypothetical collection of Jesus's sayings) as Jesus is; he defends the use of Mandean sources (third-century CE gnostic writings) in the search for the historical John the Baptist; and he argues that if one assumes continuity rather than rupture between John and Jesus, a good deal of information about John can be revealed. He then posits that shared echoes and phrases in several late infancy narratives of John suggest access to early (and therefore reliable) features of the John story, and explores the unique aspects of John's baptism. McGrath also claims that Jesus's use of the term "son of man" can be related to John's reference to the one coming after him. Finally, he traces the origins of Gnosticism to the intersection of ancient Israelite traditions and John's baptism itself, and traces the use of *Abba* in prayer to John the Baptist, from whom Jesus learned as one of his disciples. There is so much here that is creative and provocative that it will take scholars generations to unpack.

For many of the claims of this book to be persuasive, one must first accept that the Gospels are essentially history with bits of theology that can be easily spotted and removed. One must also accept that collective memory is essentially reliable and that unreliable memories are easily spotted and explainable.

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The problem with both presuppositions is that they are no longer defensible.

First, scholars used to imagine theological influence on the Gospels like chocolate chips in a cookie. They believed they could discover the bits of theological influence and remove them, leaving historically reliable material. But contemporary historiography sees theological influence more like the flour used to make the cookie, not the chocolate chips added to it. And one cannot distill flour from a cookie once it is baked. New Testament scholars have realized that there can no longer be any quest for *the* historical Jesus: Our sources and criteria simply cannot get us there. McGrath knows and cites this critical work but does not appear to take it very seriously in many of the claims he makes about John and Jesus.

Second, I concur with McGrath that we need to think of the various pieces of information about John the Baptist (e.g., the Gospels, Josephus, Mandean) as forms of collective memory. They are collective memory because none of the sources was written by an eyewitness, or even likely by a person with access to an eyewitness. The problem is that McGrath relies on the popular perception that collective memory is essentially reliable—especially if focused on a story's general essence as opposed to its details. But there is a good deal of research that shows that accuracy is far from the primary concern of collective memory. This does not mean, of course, that there is never anything accurate in collective memories. The crippling problem is that there are no methods or criteria that can distinguish accurate collective memories from manufactured ones (except perhaps in the most fantastic cases, such as snakes speaking to humans). Yet McGrath repeatedly imagines that collective memories about John the Baptist are essentially reliable.

This study reflects many of the very best traits of long-past scholarship on the New Testament: It is rich in research, erudite, sweeping in its expertise, and thoroughly familiar with a wide array of primary sources. But it also approaches its task in ways that reflect some of the naiveté of this past scholarship: that we can know the thoughts and motivations of Jesus or John the Baptist, and that we can access those through a nuanced reading of ancient Christian writings (suggesting a very high interest in historical accuracy on the part of those writers). Repeatedly, McGrath makes statements about John based on things Jesus said or did, without first establishing the historical accuracy of those things. A book on John the Baptist that took seriously the demise of the criteria used in the search for the historical Jesus might have looked very different.

McGrath correctly opines that perfect certainty is not required for historians to be able to say something. However, historians also need to be able to admit when the number and nature of the sources on a topic do not allow them to say very much at all. I think the topic of John the Baptist is perhaps one of those topics.

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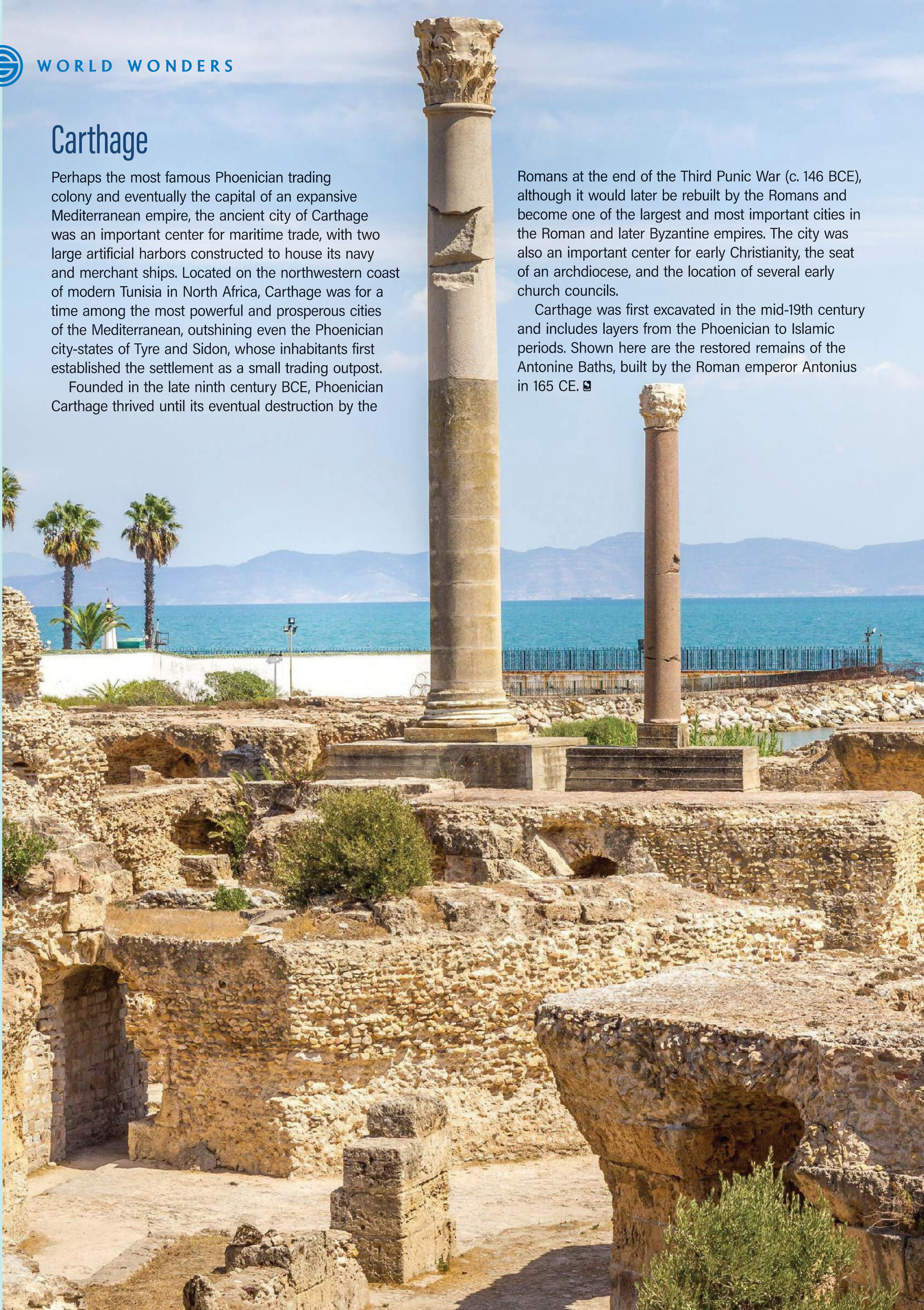
Carthage

Perhaps the most famous Phoenician trading colony and eventually the capital of an expansive Mediterranean empire, the ancient city of Carthage was an important center for maritime trade, with two large artificial harbors constructed to house its navy and merchant ships. Located on the northwestern coast of modern Tunisia in North Africa, Carthage was for a time among the most powerful and prosperous cities of the Mediterranean, outshining even the Phoenician city-states of Tyre and Sidon, whose inhabitants first established the settlement as a small trading outpost.

Founded in the late ninth century BCE, Phoenician Carthage thrived until its eventual destruction by the Romans at the end of the Third Punic War (c. 146 BCE), although it would later be rebuilt by the Romans and become one of the largest and most important cities in the Roman and later Byzantine empires. The city was also an important center for early Christianity, the seat of an archdiocese, and the location of several early church councils.

Carthage was first excavated in the mid-19th century and includes layers from the Phoenician to Islamic periods. Shown here are the restored remains of the Antonine Baths, built by the Roman emperor Antonius in 165 CE.



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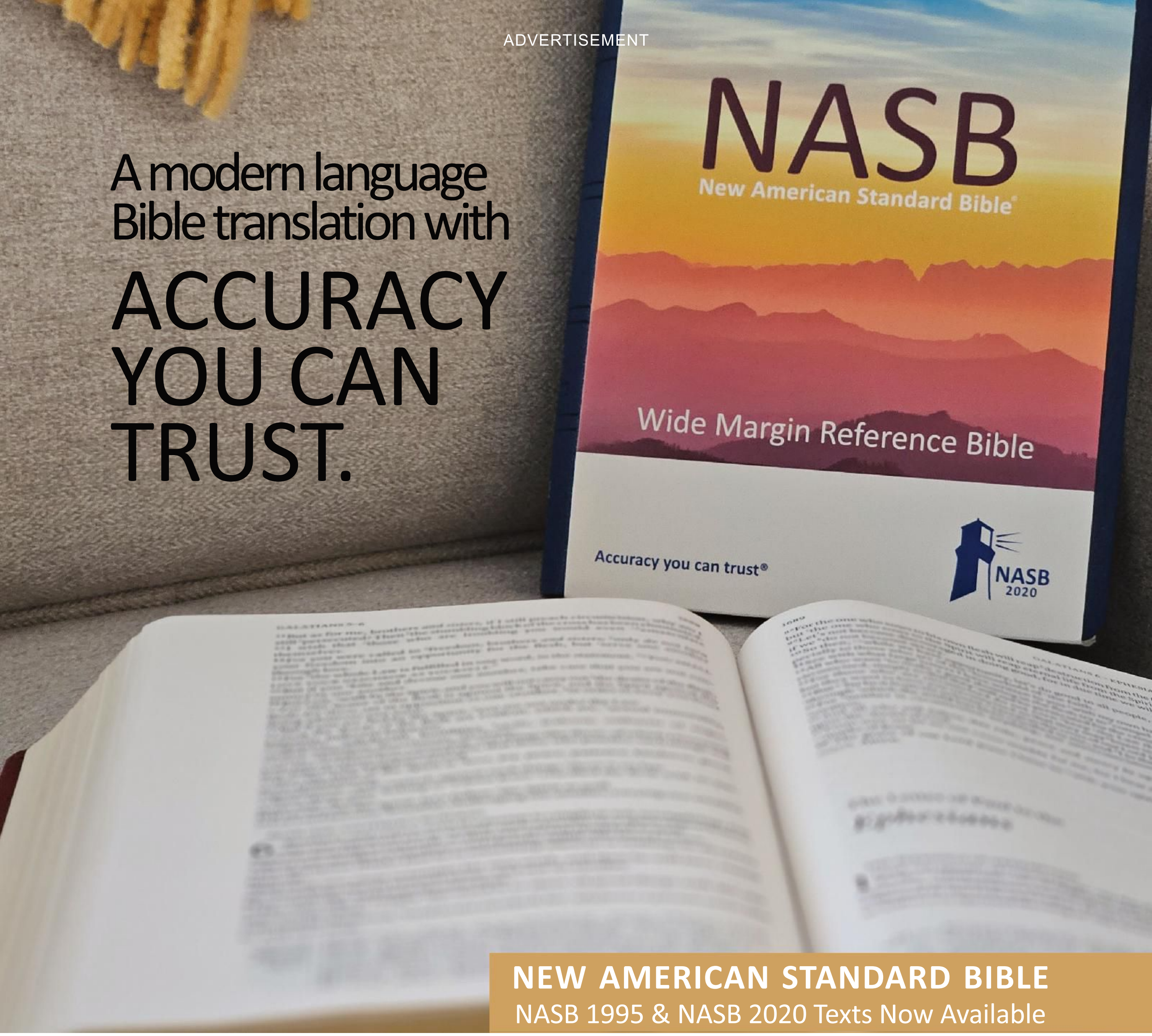
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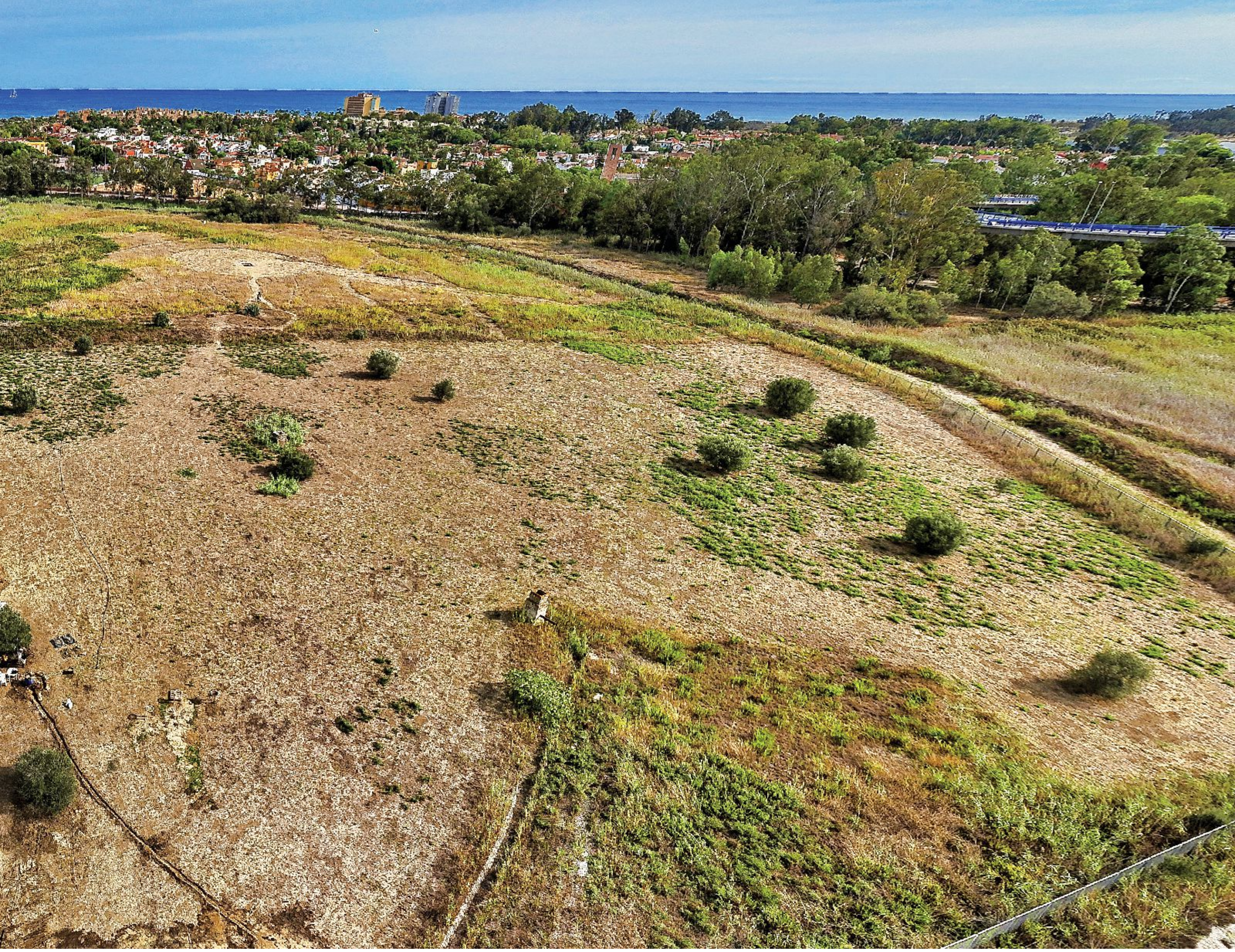
From Tyre to Tarshish

The Phoen

BY THE LATE NINTH CENTURY BCE, Canaanites from Tyre, Sidon, and other Phoenician cities of the Levantine coast had made new homes in far-off places across the Mediterranean, from Kition in Cyprus to Carthage in Tunisia to Gadir (modern Cádiz) in southern Spain (Iberia). Literary sources, inscriptions, and archaeology confirm the long-lasting success of the Phoenician project overseas, especially in southern Iberia, an area rich in valuable metals, such as silver and tin.

The wealth of Iberia became synonymous with Phoenician economic and maritime power during the Iron Age (c. 1200–586 BCE). Indeed, the Hebrew Bible closely links Tyre, the most powerful of the Phoenician city-states, with Tarshish, a distant land likely to be identified with Tartessos in southern Iberia, which was home to a powerful and wealthy people who rose to prominence in the first millennium BCE through their control of the region's metal resources (see "Locating Biblical Tarshish," p. 39).[1] In his invective against Tyre, for example, the prophet Ezekiel says, "Tarshish trafficked with you [i.e., Tyre] because of your great wealth of every kind; silver, iron, tin, and lead they exchanged for your wares" (27:12). Similarly, in Isaiah's famous oracle



icians in Spain

CAROLINA LÓPEZ-RUIZ, DAVID SCHLOEN, AND **JOSÉ SUÁREZ PADILLA**

against Tyre, written when the city faced renewed threats from Assyria, we read, "Is this your exultant city, whose origin is from days of old, whose feet carried her to settle far away? … Cross over to your own land, O ships of Tarshish; this harbor is no more" (23:6–10).

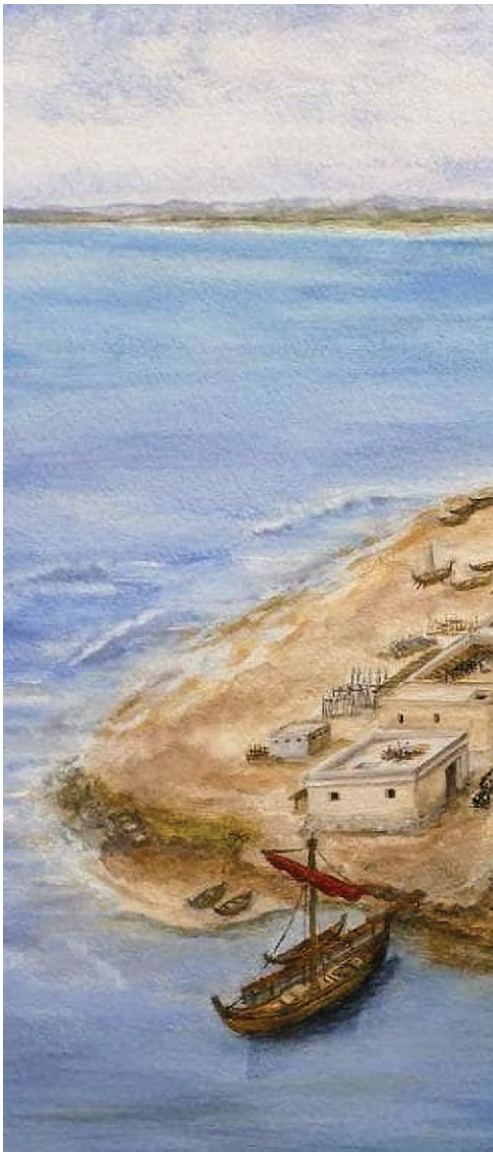
What led the Phoenicians to sail so far west and establish permanent enclaves in Iberia, a land that must have been largely terra incognita? Our written sources for answering this question are admittedly limited, with most of what we know about Phoenician expansion coming from brief references in Assyrian and biblical texts, or allusions to Phoenicians in Greek sources such as Homer and Herodotus. Later written traditions, transmitted by Greek and Roman historians, present the early

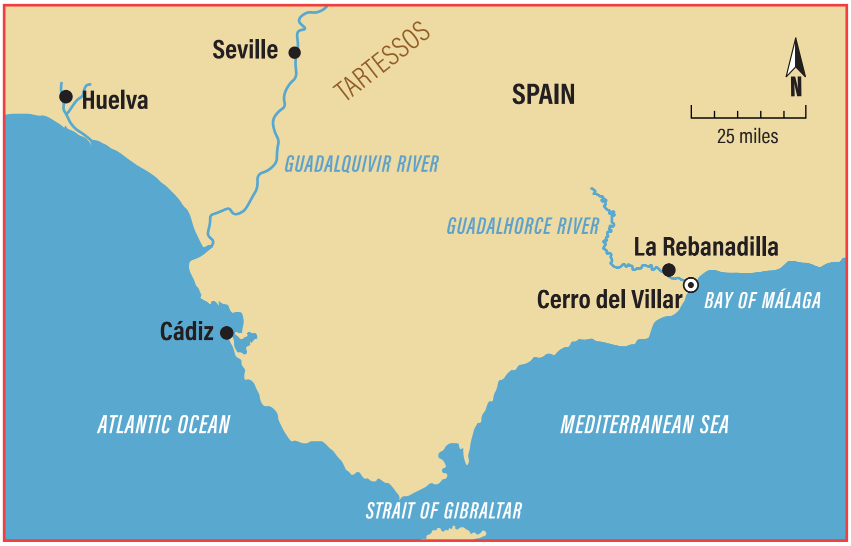
WESTERN HORIZONS. Tucked between the modern Spanish city of Málaga and its nearby airport, the ancient Phoenician site of Cerro del Villar sits alongside the mouth of the Guadalhorce River. Today, the river is confined to a canal (visible at left) that splits as it nears the coast, passing the silt-rich area of agricultural land on which the ancient site is located. But during its heyday from the eighth to sixth centuries BCE, the immediate area around this prosperous Phoenician trading colony was open delta with several small, low-lying islets, on one of which the town was built.

PHOTODRONE TECH SL / CERRO DEL VILLAR ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT

western Phoenician settlements in the style of Greek colonies, initiated by political motivations, such as in Carthage (Justin, *Epitome* 18.4–6), and guided by oracles and omens, as in Gadir (Strabo, *Geography* 3.5.5). Cultural and religious ties between Tyre and Phoenicians living abroad lasted for centuries and reinforced their political and economic bonds, as exemplified by temples to the chief Phoenician god Melqart in both Tyre and Gadir, located at the opposite ends of the Mediterranean.

These sources paint a picture of a network of Phoenician settlements that allowed for stable and defensible long-distance trade across the Mediterranean. This trade supported a number of highly successful industries for which the Phoenicians were famous: timber, purple dye, ivory, ostrich eggs, salted fish, and, probably most profitable of all, metals, especially silver and tin. The procurement, processing, and transport of these products relied on securing access to native resources in the western Mediterranean. In building these trade networks, the Phoenicians not only achieved great prominence during the time of the Assyrian Empire (see "Masters of the Mediterranean," p. 41) but also established Carthage and other major port cities that would become

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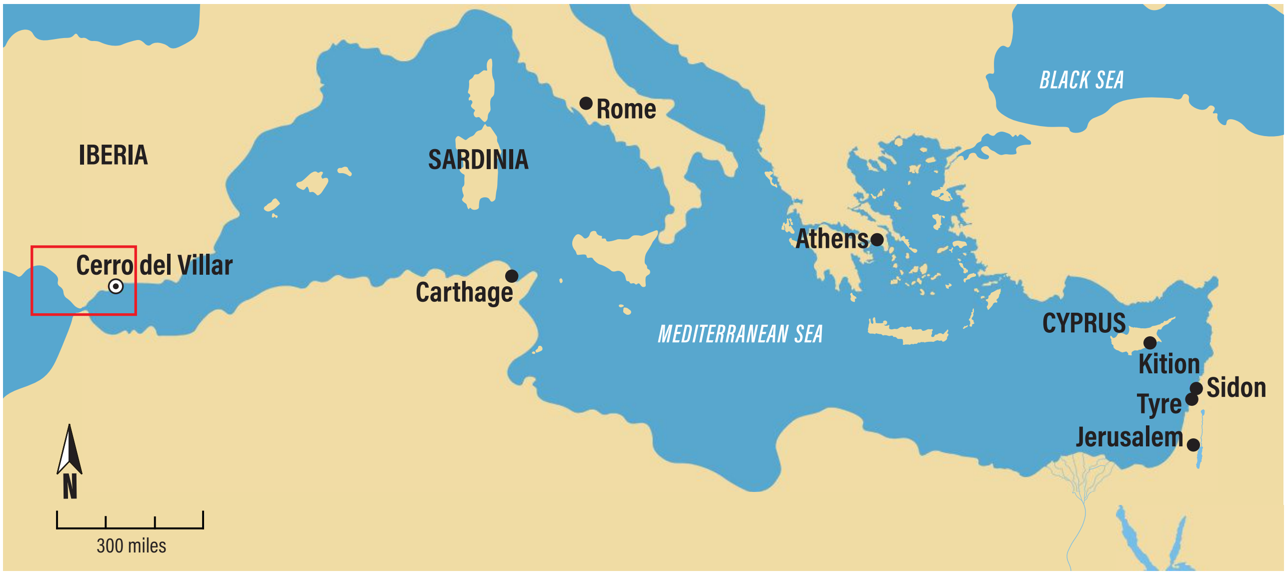
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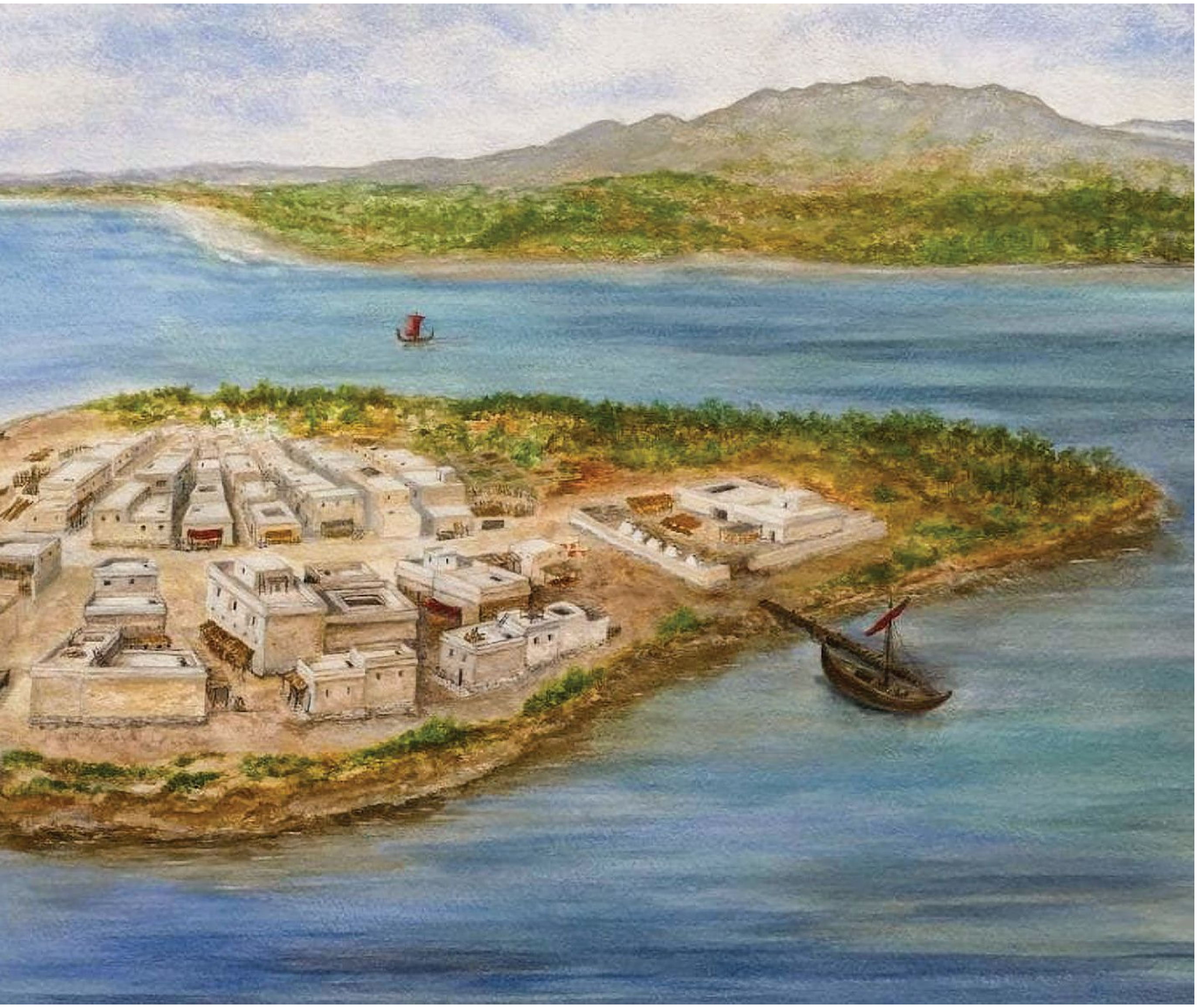


CARMEN NAVÍO SOTO / CERRO DEL VILLAR ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT

BUSTLING TRADE CENTER. This artistic recreation of the ancient town of Cerro del Villar shows a thriving community readily accessible by water from both the sea and sites upstream. This harbor town developed deep ties to neighboring sites and peoples as well as to the region's natural resources, while also maintaining strong connections with the Phoenician heartland far to the east on the Levantine coast. The settlement was a dense, well-planned grid of streets featuring large multi-room residences and extensive commercial spaces.

Mediterranean powerhouses in the late first millennium BCE.

Given the limitations of our written sources, we are heavily dependent on archaeology to address key questions about the Phoenician expansion: What did these outposts look like? What was their relationship with the local population and with cities in their Levantine homeland? How did they manage their resources and sustain their communities? What can we know about their cultural, religious, or ethnic identity?

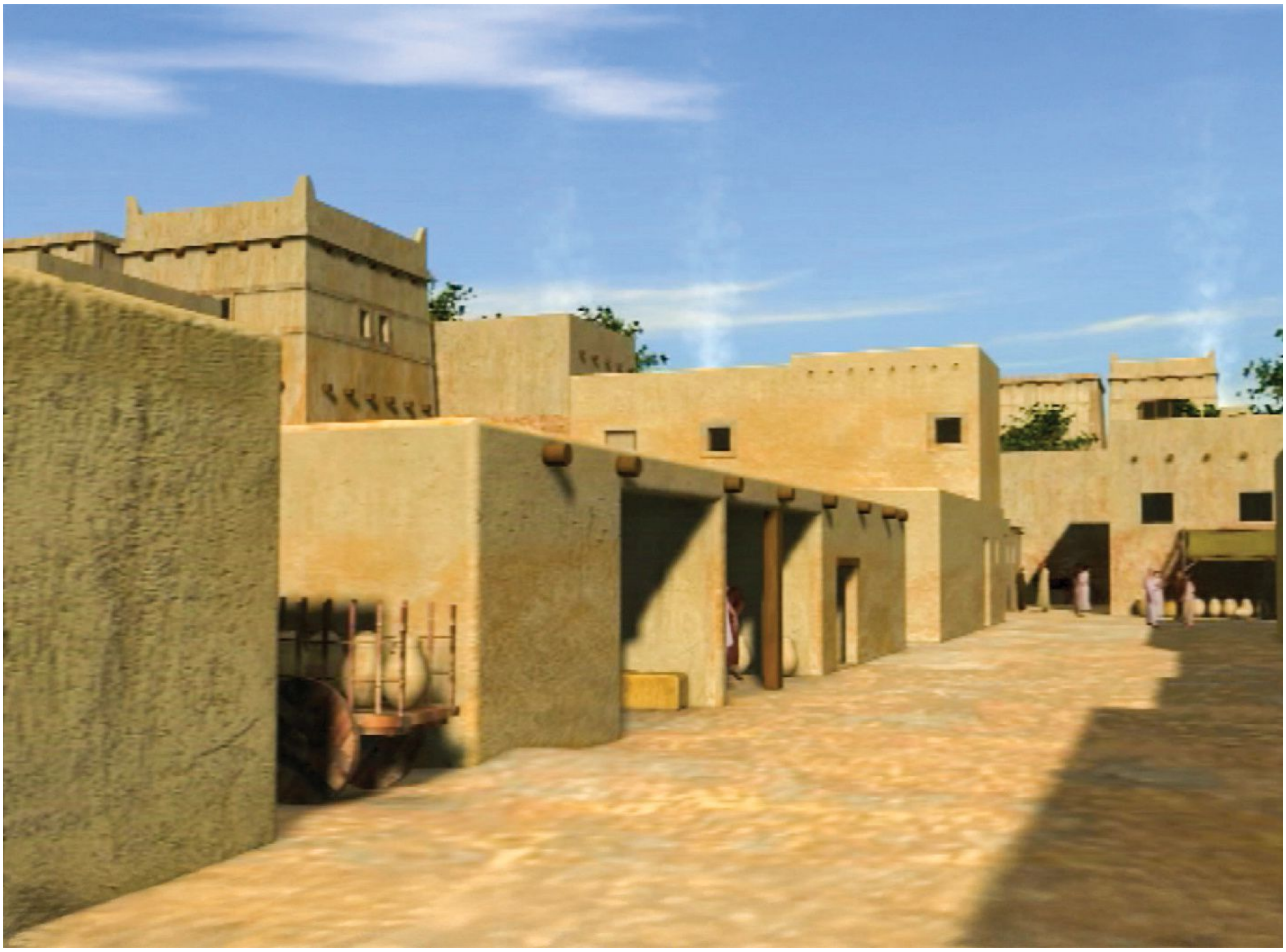
The site of Cerro del Villar, located on the Bay of Málaga in southern Spain, just on the outskirts of the Andalusian port city, offers a unique vantage point to address some of these questions. The nearly 20-acre site was built on one of several islets located at the mouth of the Guadalhorce River, now constrained to a canal that runs east of the Málaga airport. Three millennia ago, this area was an open delta, only partly closed by sand banks, that over the centuries silted over to become agricultural marshland, which is how it appears today. On the largest of these islets, Phoenician merchants established a prominent coastal community that thrived from the eighth to sixth centuries BCE.

Building on earlier excavations conducted at the site decades ago, most notably by the late Spanish archaeologist María Eugenia Aubet, our joint team from the University of Málaga and the University of Chicago's Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures has returned to this key Phoenician enclave to gather more information about its urban layout, commercial and industrial activities, and connections with broader Mediterranean and local networks.

This settlement—along with La Rebanadilla, a neighboring island site with Phoenician occupation that extends back to the late ninth century, and several other early Phoenician sites around the Bay of Málaga—provides archaeologists with a unique perspective into Phoenician life in the western Mediterranean. Cerro del Villar was a harbor community that developed strong local connections while also maintaining links with the Phoenician homeland in the Levant. Excavation, survey, and geophysical analysis have revealed a densely constructed settlement with well-planned urban development, especially in the late eighth to early seventh centuries. The town featured large residences with multiple rooms, as well as commercial spaces with adobe structures built along a regular grid of streets. One such "commercial street" had several buildings whose lower rooms were dedicated to different industries, including metalwork, pottery production, and trade. The site shows no signs of defensive walls, and we have yet to uncover any monumental buildings or the site's burial ground, although both probably existed, given that only about 10 percent of the site has been excavated.

The site's houses, which have multiple rooms often situated around a courtyard, combine both working and living areas, with dedicated spaces for ceramic and metallurgic activity. They resemble houses documented at other Phoenician sites in the Bay of Málaga, such as Morro de Mezquitilla, Toscanos, and Chorreras, which span the eighth to seventh centuries. Houses excavated to the west in Cádiz provide even earlier examples, offering a small window into the foundations of Phoenician western expansion in the late ninth century. According to Aubet, these dwellings, which are nearly identical in style and construction to large houses in the earliest phases of Phoenician settlement at Carthage, indicate the presence of wealthy merchants from the first moment of settlement.[2]

Cerro del Villar was a center of pottery production. A number of kilns unearthed by Aubet testify to the direct transfer of ceramic practices and technologies from the Levant, as the ovens are nearly identical to those uncovered at Phoenician sites in Lebanon (such as Sarepta). Locally made amphorae, which likely contained products such as salted fish and various agricultural goods, were exported widely to sites across the Mediterranean, including Sardinia, Carthage, and other North African enclaves, and to various Phoenician markets on the Iberian Peninsula. In turn, Cerro del Villar received finely made ceramics from abroad, not only Phoenician pottery but also Greek and Etruscan



MARÍA EUGENIA AUBET / MÁLAGA MUSEUM

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TRADING SPACES. **Consistent with building patterns at other Phoenician sites in the region, the typical house at Cerro del Villar had multiple rooms, such as those shown being excavated here (opposite), situated around a central courtyard. The rooms within such dwellings were used for both domestic and commercial purposes and included dedicated spaces for activities such as metalworking and pottery production. At its peak, the site had a bustling economy driven by these activities, as well as by a vibrant trade in raw materials and finished products. The digital reconstruction above imagines a commercial thoroughfare running through the heart of the site.**

wares. Among the more interesting finds are a significant number of Ionian cups and a complete Greek amphora dating to around 700 BCE. Levantine imports include typical Phoenician ceramics, such as perfume flasks and wine amphorae.

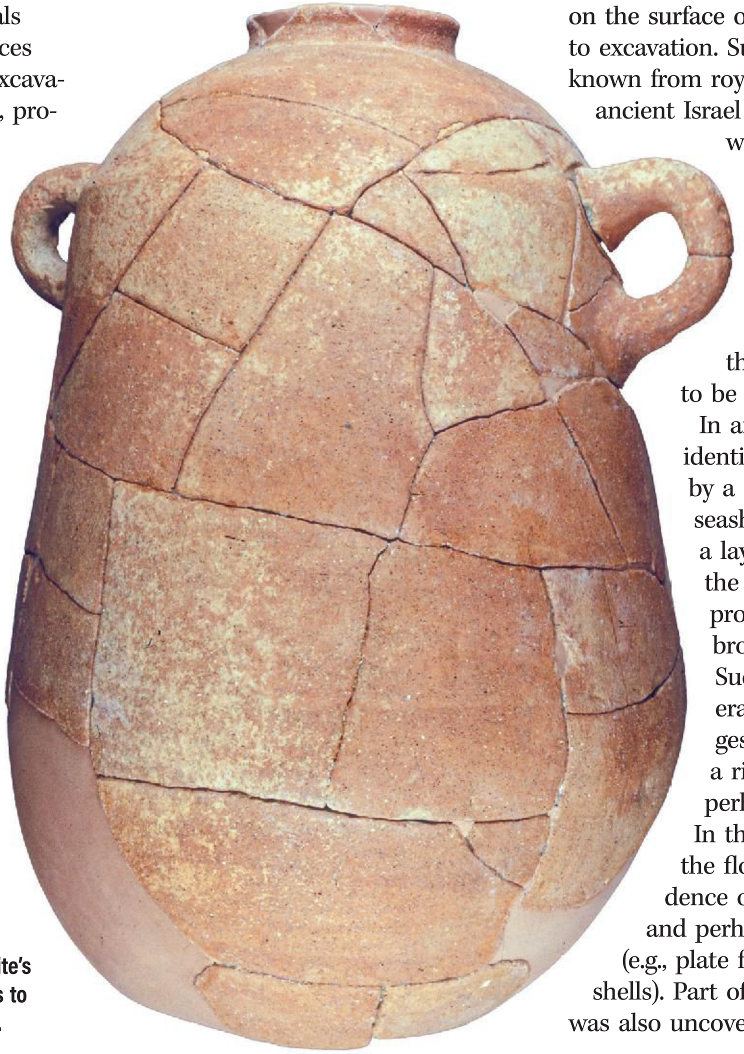
Perhaps not surprisingly, fishhooks, fishing weights, and stone anchors illustrate the community's dependence on maritime trade and communication with other coastal enclaves and Mediterranean ports. However, plant remains reveal these Phoenician settlers also had access to nearby cultivated lands in southern Iberia. Agricultural production in interior valleys—likely farmed by indigenous peoples—supplied staples, such as barley and wheat, legumes, grapes, and olives. In return, local groups gained access to international goods and luxury objects (e.g., worked metal, ivories, seals), and adopted new styles and technologies, including alphabetic writing and monumental construction techniques. Cerro del Villar, therefore, was not only well connected to international trade networks but also seems to have been a regional trading center, a node of exchange between Iberia and the broader Mediterranean.

Unfortunately, we have no information regarding the political or social dynamics that governed this Phoenician community. Archaeology is more generous when it comes to evidence about their burials and ritual customs. Although the burial ground of Cerro del Villar has yet to be identified (it is likely hidden beneath modern development), cremation urns—a common form of Phoenician burial—were recovered from several nearby sites, most significantly at the necropolis associated with La Rebanadilla. There, Phoenician-style funerary urns, burial assemblages, and burial pits, all of which closely resemble burials discovered at the Tyrian necropolis of Al-Bass, were found together with more local funerary elements. In addition, stone-built hypogea (underground burial chambers), another common form of Phoenician burial, were found at Trayamar (about 20 miles east of Málaga), indicating that some Phoenician families accumulated extraordinary wealth. Phoenician graves across southern Iberia also feature large numbers of Egyptian alabaster vases, again attesting to high-end commercial and perhaps diplomatic connections across the Mediterranean.

A variety of other materials associated with ritual practices have come from scattered excavations in and around Málaga, providing glimpses of religious life within these Phoenician communities. For example, a sacred space with several altars was found at Calle Cister in Málaga's city center, while a Cypriot bronze incense burner and other ritual objects were excavated at Cerro del Peñón in Vélez-Málaga (east of Málaga, near Toscanos). In addition, excavations at La Rebanadilla produced possible religious structures marked by seashell pavements (a feature that seems to have marked sacred spaces) and various cultic finds, including an incense burner, a stone betyl, and a graffito that may reference Eshmun, the principal god of Sidon (probably in a personal name).

Although we have yet to identify any monumental public or cultic buildings at Cerro del Villar, traces of ritual life have surfaced in scattered finds, showing how religious activity permeated the community. In one house, previous excavations unearthed a room partially paved with seashells that contained possible ritual deposits, including oil lamps and ostrich eggs. In addition, a volute capital fragment was discovered on the surface of this area prior to excavation. Such capitals, well known from royal architecture in ancient Israel and Judah, were widely used in monumental graves and shrines across the Phoenician world. Its presence suggests an important religious building at the site that has yet to be discovered.[3]

In another house, we identified a floor covered by a number of large seashells that rested on a layer of beach pebbles; the shells, in turn, were protected by a layer of broken pottery sherds. Such careful and deliberate deposition suggests the floor covered a ritual deposit or perhaps even a burial. In the areas surrounding the floor, we found evidence of food consumption and perhaps ritual feasting (e.g., plate fragments, mussel shells). Part of a stone anchor was also uncovered just outside this



FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC. Cerro del Villar was a major pottery production center that maintained strong connections with Phoenician styles and traditions. Kilns at the site are virtually identical to those discovered at Phoenician sites in the Levant. The amphora at right is a locally produced vessel, yet its form is typical Phoenician. At the same time, however, the mercantile character of the community led to the import of goods from trading partners spanning the Mediterranean. The decorated sherd shown above, which bears a fragmentary Greek inscription, is a testament to the site's cosmopolitan tastes and its access to luxury goods from far-flung places.

INSET PHOTOS: CERRO DEL VILLAR ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT / COURTESY OF MARÍA EUGENIA AUBET

Locating Biblical Tarshish

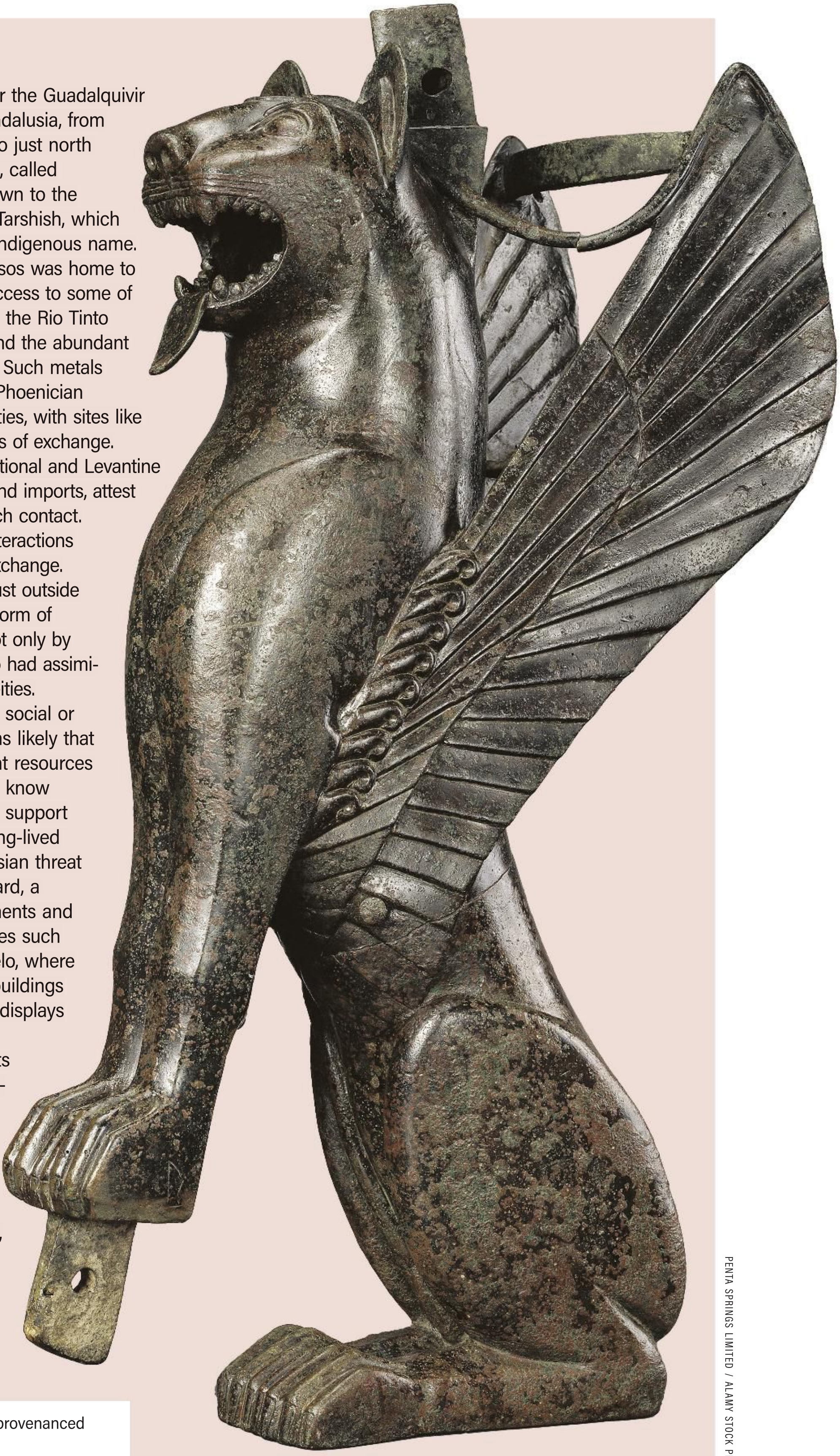
Tartessos was the ancient Greek name for the Guadalquivir River, which runs through the heart of Andalusia, from the inland areas of Córdoba and Seville to just north of Cádiz on the Atlantic coast. The region, called Turdetania by the Romans, was likely known to the Phoenicians (and the biblical writers) as Tarshish, which was probably a Semitic form of its local indigenous name.

During the first millennium BCE, Tartessos was home to a powerful local people who controlled access to some of Europe's richest metal deposits, especially the Rio Tinto mines (about 45 miles north of Huelva) and the abundant pyrite resources spread across Andalusia. Such metals were the main reason for trade between Phoenician entrepreneurs and local Iberian communities, with sites like Huelva and Seville becoming early centers of exchange.

Wealthy burials that combine both traditional and Levantine elements, including "orientalizing" goods and imports, attest to the mixed culture that resulted from such contact. Sanctuaries were at the center of these interactions and provided safe spaces for economic exchange. For instance, at the site of El Carambolo just outside Seville, the Levantine gods Ashtart and a form of Baal, perhaps Melqart, were worshiped not only by Phoenician traders, but also by locals who had assimilated these gods to their own ancestral deities.

Unfortunately, we know little about the social or political organization of Tartessos. It seems likely that local chiefs controlled the area's abundant resources well into the sixth century BCE, when we know Ionian Greeks came to Iberia seeking the support of Tartessos's wealthy and proverbially long-lived king, Arganthonios, in the face of the Persian threat (Herodotus, *Histories* 1.163.1–165.2). Afterward, a crisis affected the region's coastal settlements and pushed the Tartessic culture inland, to sites such as Cancho Roano and Casas del Turuñuelo, where archaeologists have found monumental buildings and a cosmopolitan material culture that displays Levantine styles and techniques.

After the sixth century, Tartessos and its wealth began to fade into legend, becoming associated in Greek myth with the far reaches of the known world (including stories about Herakles). Traces of its culture and language, however, continued to live on among Iberia's later inhabitants, the Turdetanians, whom the Romans identified with the Tartessic legacy.



This unprovenanced 2-foot-tall figure of a winged feline is believed to be from the Tartessos region (seventh-sixth century BCE).

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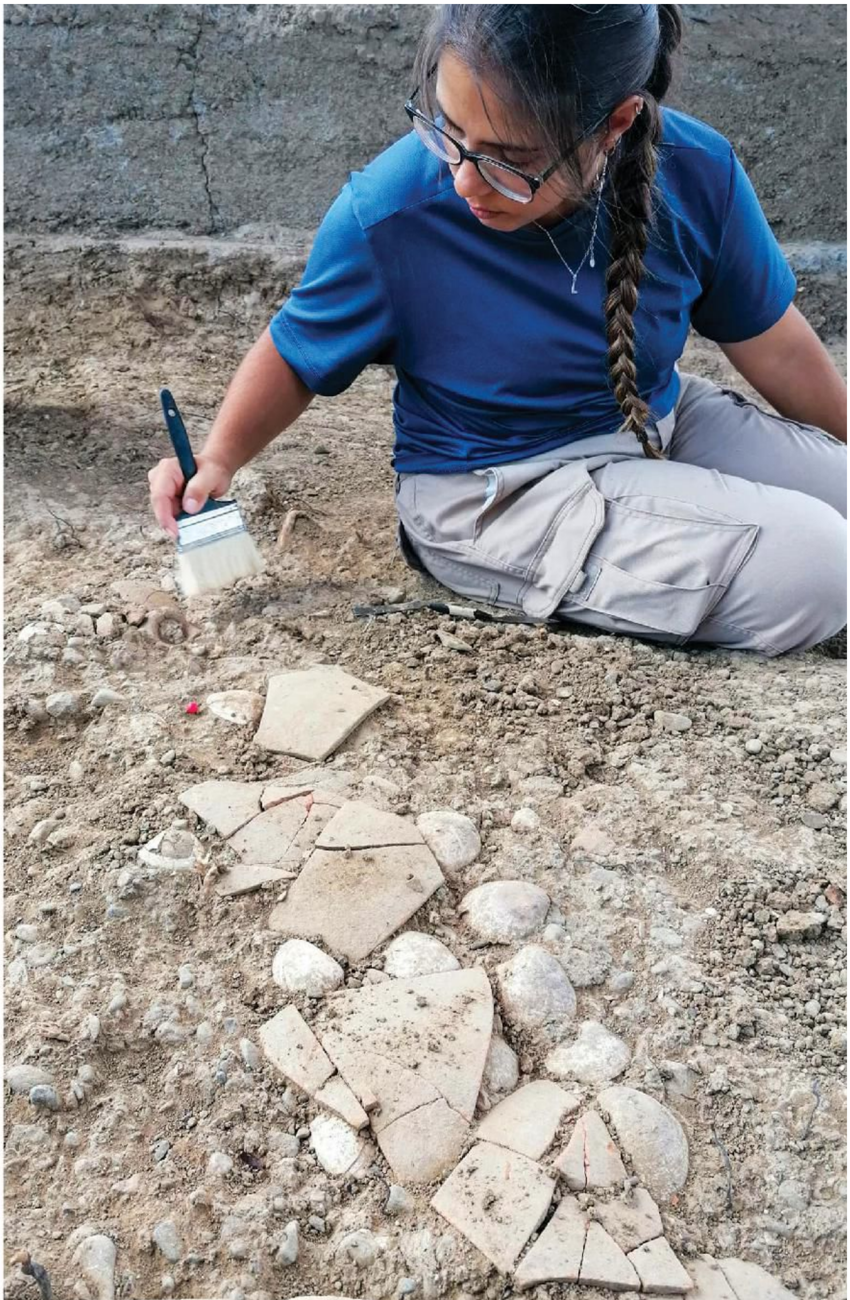
Learn more about the problems with unprovenanced objects at **barmag.org/provenance.**

RITUAL AND RELIGION. While no monumental or religious buildings have yet been identified at Cerro del Villar, there are indications that the community enjoyed a vibrant ritual life. Rooms paved with pottery and seashells, such as that shown at right, are suggestive of dedicated ritual spaces; possible ritual deposits such as oil lamps and ostrich eggs, as well as evidence for communal feasting, strengthen this assessment. Meanwhile, a small fragment from a painted volute capital (highlighted below in a composite image of a nearly identical capital from Megiddo), which was typical of Levantine ceremonial architecture during the Iron Age, may indicate the presence of a religious structure at the site that has yet to be discovered.

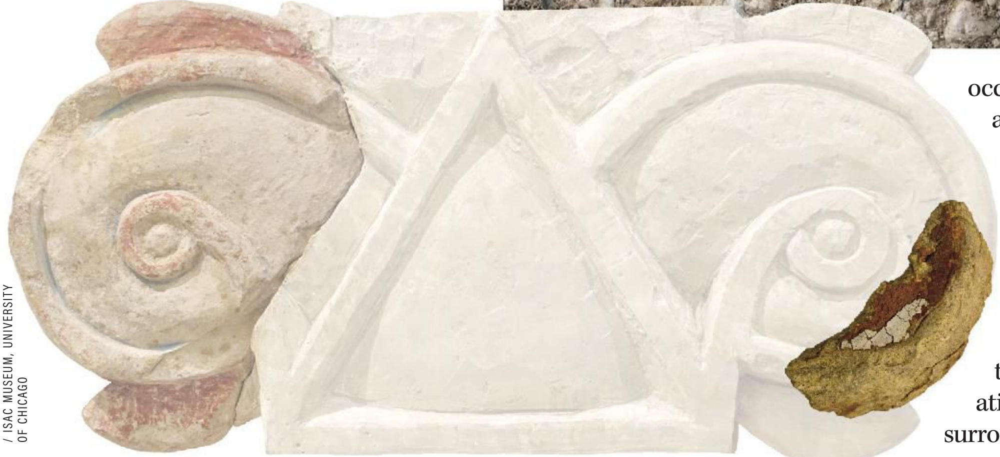


CERRO DEL VILLAR ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT

room, suggesting a possible votive function.

Without a doubt, one of the most fascinating aspects of Cerro del Villar is its challenging environment. Situated on the coast at the mouth of a river, the settlement was inundated several times over the course of its two centuries of existence. In fact, the current excavations are documenting the extent of these floods to determine if they originated from the river (fluvial) or the sea (marine) and how the site's inhabitants responded to these challenges.[4]

The first flooding event, which occurred at the beginning of the seventh century, was fluvial and had catastrophic consequences, depositing more than 3 feet of sediment across parts of the site. This event clearly impacted the town's occupants and their livelihoods, as some buildings had to be heavily renovated while others were entirely rebuilt. The second event, which occurred at the end of the same century, was probably marine in nature and may have been caused by a storm surge or tsunami. This precarious situation, which left the settlement surrounded by marshland and



COURTESY OF J. A. MARTÍN RUIZ AND J. R. GARCÍA CARRETERO / ISAC MUSEUM, UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO expanding riverbeds, was likely the reason Cerro del Villar was abandoned as a residential settlement in the sixth century. We think the community moved to the area of the current city of Málaga, which began to expand about this same time. Afterward, Cerro del Villar was used almost exclusively for industrial activity, especially pottery production and the manufacture of *garum*, the famous Phoenician fish sauce well known from Greco-Roman sources.

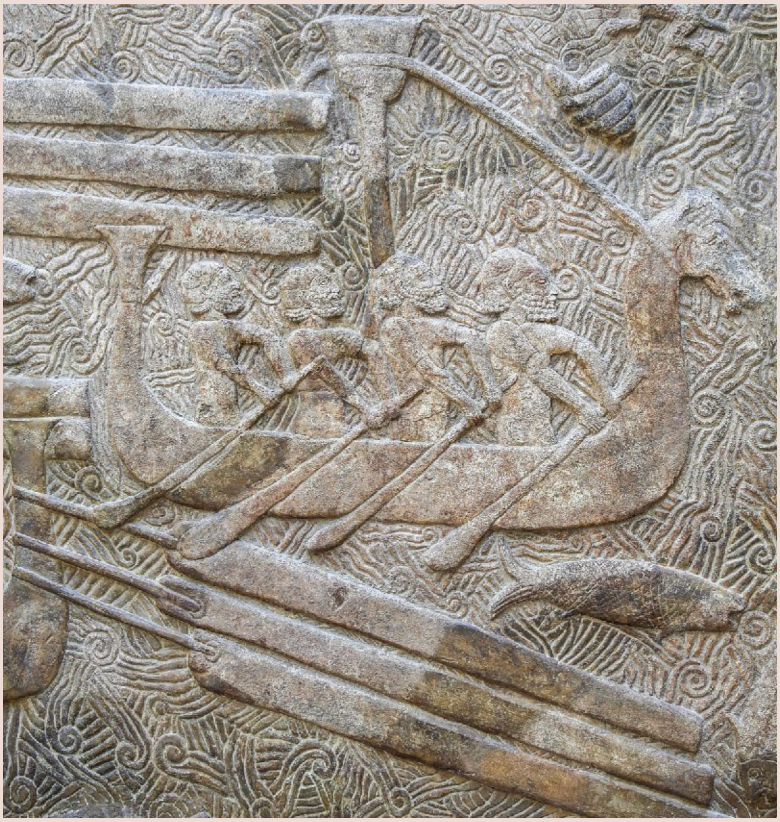
The Bay of Málaga and in particular the site of Cerro del Villar provide a perfect laboratory to study Phoenician trade and migration in the western Mediterranean. Through this site, which we will continue to excavate in coming years, material remains evince the buzzing small ports, fish factories, and sacred spaces that characterized the lives of the average Phoenician traders and merchants who settled in this distant land. At the same time, we also find evidence of wealthy elites who could afford luxurious burials and access precious objects and materials from across the Mediterranean. Perhaps most important, especially in light of the many environmental concerns that we face today, we can document the various strategies these early Phoenician colonies adopted to sustain themselves in a changing environment.

Masters of the Mediterranean

Scholars long thought the main impetus for Phoenicia's westward expansion was the Assyrian Empire, which demanded heavy tribute from the Phoenician city-states in the form of silver and timber. But archaeology indicates that intense trade with Iberia, and especially the areas west of the Strait of Gibraltar that were rich in metals, began a century or more before the rise of Assyria in the eighth century BCE. Early Phoenician settlements at sites such as Gadir, Carthage, and others now put the expansion in the mid- to late ninth century. In fact, as the Assyrians pushed westward in the eighth century, Tyre and Sidon enjoyed a more lenient treatment, precisely because they functioned as critical gateways to the Mediterranean.

We therefore need a different model to explain how and why the Phoenicians began to sail west. As a start, the independent city-states of the Phoenician coast were largely unscathed by the destructions and collapses that affected other Canaanite centers around 1200 BCE. Taking advantage of their centuries-long maritime experience, the Phoenician cities leveraged previous though irregular contacts with distant Mediterranean ports to establish an extensive network of stable, interconnected settlements far to the west.

It is unlikely that long-distance trade of this scope could have succeeded without state sponsorship. Even if we cannot attribute this initiative to Hiram, the tenth-century king of Tyre whom the Bible presents as King Solomon's ally in a joint trading venture that involved "ships of Tarshish" (1 Kings 10:22), we might attribute it to the later Tyrian king Ittobaal (Ethbaal), father of the infamous Jezebel. Archaeological evidence, including radiocarbon dates from Gadir, the earliest and most famous of Phoenicia's Iberian colonies, shows that regular trade was well established by the late ninth century, with permanent colonial settlements underway within a matter of decades.



ERICH LESSING / ART RESOURCE, NY

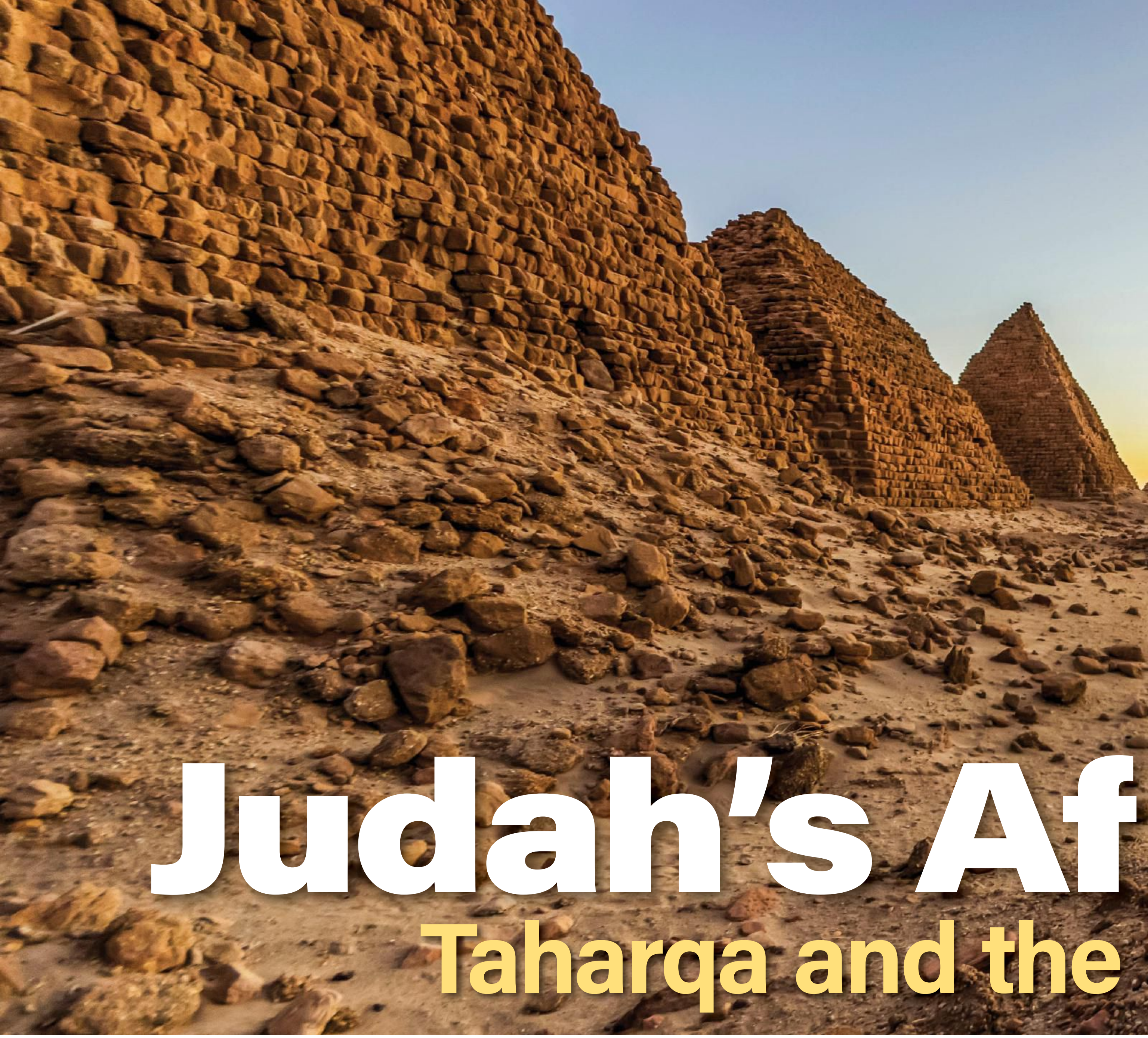
Assyrian relief depicting a Phoenician ship transporting timber across the sea.

[1] See Sebastián Celestino and Carolina López-Ruiz, *Tartessos and the Phoenicians in Iberia* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2016), and Carolina López-Ruiz, "Tarshish and Tartessos Revisited: Textual Problems and Historical Implications," in M. Dietler and C. López-Ruiz, eds., *Colonial Encounters in Ancient Iberia: Phoenician, Greek, and Indigenous Relations* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2009), pp. 255–280.

[2] María E. Aubet, "El Sistema colonial fenicio y sus pautas de organización," *Mainake* 28 (2006), p. 38.

[3] For further discussion, see Fanni Faegersten and Carolina López-Ruiz, "New insights on the 'Volute Capital' Motif: Its Materials, Meaning, and Contexts in the Phoenician World and Beyond," *Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology and Heritage Studies* 11.2–3 (2023), pp. 229–255.

[4] M. Álvarez-Martí-Aguilar et al., "Archaeological and Geophysical Evidence of a High-Energy Marine Event at the Phoenician Site of Cerro del Villar (Malaga, Spain)," in M. Álvarez-Martí-Aguilar and F. Machuca Prieto, eds., *Historical Earthquakes, Tsunamis and Archaeology in the Iberian Peninsula* (Singapore: Springer, 2022), pp. 179–201.



Judah's Af

Taharqa and the

JAMES K. HOFFMEIER

THE JUDAHITE KING HEZEKIAH was facing a harrowing crisis in 701 BC. The full wrath of Sennacherib's Assyrian army was poised to attack Judah. Knowing that he had only months to prepare, Hezekiah undertook major operations to defend his tiny kingdom from the most powerful force the ancient world had ever known. In Jerusalem, according to both the Bible and archaeology, he built a massive defensive wall and cut a water tunnel to redirect the waters of the Gihon Spring inside the city (2 Chronicles 32:1–7; Isaiah 22:8–11). As **BAR** readers know, the former is identified with the so-called "Broad Wall" uncovered in Jerusalem in the 1970s, while the latter is the celebrated Hezekiah's Tunnel that can still be visited today.*

Assyrian sources further illustrate the events in vivid detail. In his own annals, Sennacherib says, "As for Hezekiah, the Judahite, I besieged 46 of his fortified walled cities and surrounded smaller towns … He himself, I locked up within Jerusalem, his royal city, like a bird in a cage." The famous Lachish reliefs, which once adorned Sennacherib's palace in Nineveh, show this siege in progress, including the wheeled battering

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* See Nitzva Rosovsky, "A Thousand Years of History in Jerusalem's Jewish Quarter," **BAR**, May/June 1992; and Dan Gill, "How They Met: Geology Solves Long-Standing Mystery of Hezekiah's Tunnelers," **BAR**, July/August 1994.

rican Ally
Kingdom of Cush

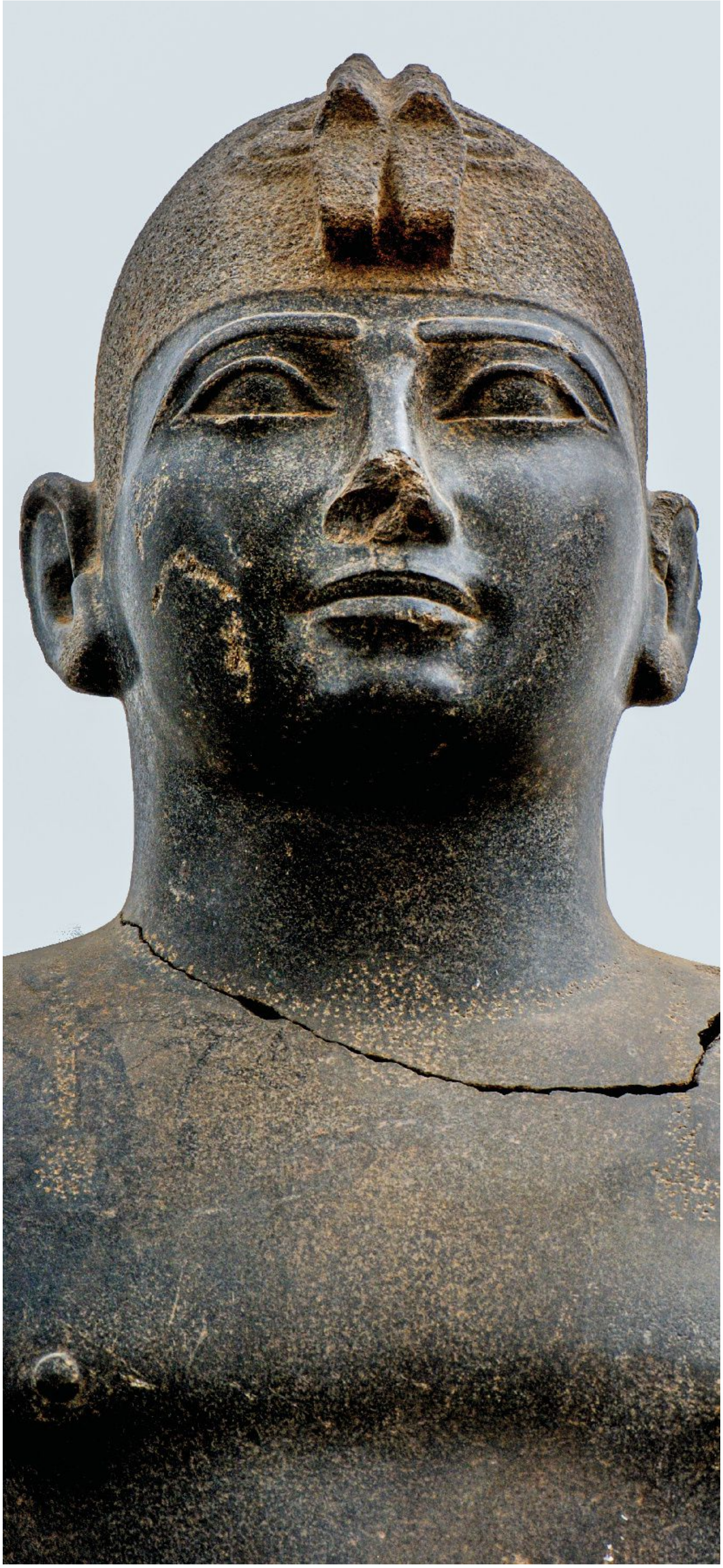
DESIGN PICS INC / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

rams, slingers, and archers who were involved in this violent campaign.

With the Assyrian invasion in full swing, we learn of another player in the dramatic events of 701 BC. The Bible claims that Sennacherib heard that "Tirhaqah, king of Cush, ... has set out to fight against [him]" (Isaiah 37:9; see also 2 Kings 19:9). Sennacherib's annals confirm this claim, though they do not mention the Cushite leader by name, simply noting, "the kings of Egypt, (and) the bowmen, chariot corps and cavalry of the kings of Cush assembled a countless force" that came to the aid of Judah and neighboring kingdoms that were under Assyrian threat.

But who was this Cushite king, known in Egyptian sources as Taharqa, who came to Judah's defense during its hour of greatest need? We'll return shortly to this intriguing figure and the important role he played in the international maelstrom of the late eighth century. But first we examine the fabled land of Cush—also called Nubia in later periods—and its rise to

CUSHITE PYRAMIDS. For much of its ancient history, the land of Cush in modern-day northern Sudan was controlled and exploited by Egypt. In the eighth century BC, however, the Cushite kings based at Napata grew powerful and conquered their northern neighbor, establishing Egypt's 25th Dynasty. According to the Bible, the Cushite king Taharqa even came to the aid of King Hezekiah of Judah in his confrontation with the mighty Assyrian Empire in 701. The Napatan royal cemetery in Nuri (above), established by Taharqa, projects the might and aspirations of this Nubian dynasty in monumental tombs fashioned as pyramids.



KENNETH GARRETT PHOTOGRAPHY

KING TAHARQA. Called Tirhaqah in the Bible (2 Kings 19:9; Isaiah 37:9), Taharqa of Cush became the greatest of the Napatan kings, ruling over Cush and Egypt from 690 to 664 BC. His court artists expressed this double kingship by placing two royal cobras (uraei) on his headdress, as in this stone statue currently in the Kerma Museum in northern Sudan. Taharqa built many temples and monuments in Cush and Egypt, including the largest pyramid in Nubia. But he was also one of the last of the Napatan pharaohs, as King Ashurbanipal of Assyria conquered Egypt in 664, effectively ending Cushite rule over Egypt.

prominence in the first millennium BC.

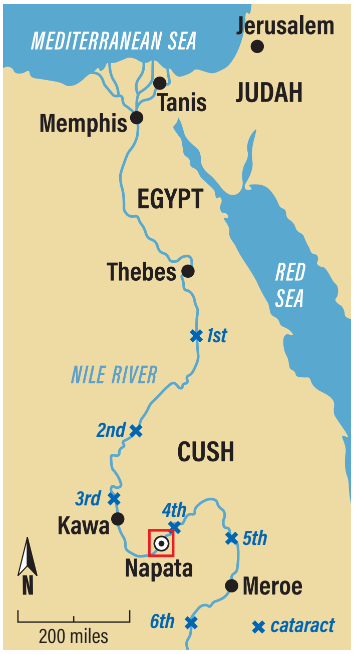
Cush is first attested in Egyptian texts from the early 20th century BC, during Egypt's 12th Dynasty. The name referred to the area south of Egypt, in the regions of the second, third, and eventually fourth Nile cataracts. This area, found in modern-day northern Sudan, was rich in gold, a precious commodity coveted by the Egyptians. Between 2000 and 1750 BC, Egyptian pharaohs colonized and exploited the region, building numerous forts to administer and protect Egypt's vital interests. During the Second Intermediate Period (1700–1525 BC), which included Hyksos rule over northern Egypt, Egypt's grip on Cush eased, but the pharaohs of the 18th Dynasty immediately reconquered the area in the late 16th century.

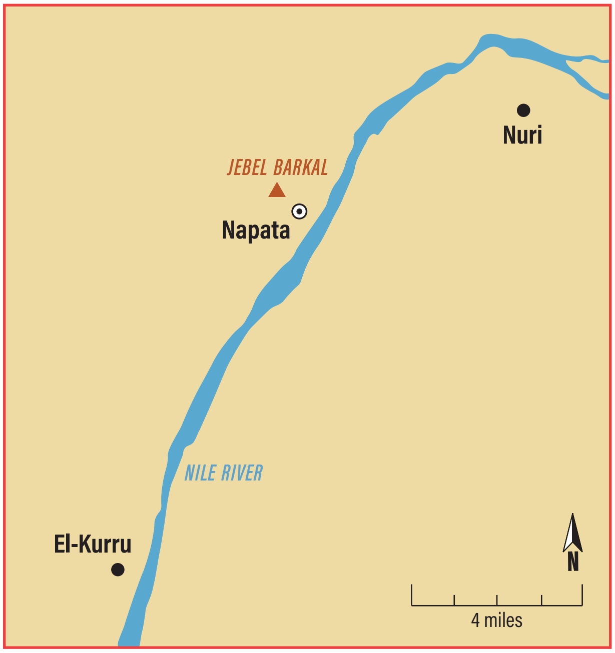
To rule over this strategic region, the pharaoh appointed a senior officer titled "the king's son of Cush," often rendered by Egyptologists as "the viceroy of Cush." Egypt's domination of Cush endured throughout the New Kingdom (1550–1100 BC), during which magnificent temples were constructed in Nubia, including the iconic rock-cut temples of Ramesses II (1279–1213 BC) at Abu Simbel. Shortly after 1100, the New Kingdom crumbled, and Egypt was divided between kings ruling from Tanis in the north and other rulers who controlled southern Egypt from Thebes.

Thus, Cush was liberated from Egyptian hegemony, but not from the influence of Egyptian culture. For the next thousand years, Cushite royalty were buried in pyramids, wrote inscriptions in Egyptian hieroglyphs, and followed Egyptian canons of art and architecture. The patron god of Thebes, Amun-Re, was the principal deity of the Cushites. In fact, the mountain of Jebel Barkal, located at the Cushite capital and cultic center of Napata in northern Sudan, was thought to be the dwelling place of Amun-Re. Several temples to Amun-Re line the southern side of the mountain, including a large sanctuary first built during the reign of Thutmose IV (1400–1390 BC) that was continually renovated and expanded by later kings.

Around 800 BC, a Cushite royal dynasty emerged in Napata, beginning a long period of Nubian power and kingship that Egyptologists define as the Napatan period (c. 800–300 BC). The progenitor of this dynasty was King Alara, about whom little is known. His successor, King Kashta, was buried under a small pyramid at El-Kurru, the dynasty's ancestral necropolis, located about 10 miles south of Jebel Barkal. It is Kashta's son Piankhy, however, who is credited with bringing the Cushites to prominence. A stela discovered at Jebel Barkal recounts his military exploits in the north where, one by one, the petty kings of Lower Egypt capitulated to his Nubian army. In around 727, Piankhy took control of Memphis, the traditional capital of Egypt, which then became the seat of Cushite rule under Egypt's 25th Dynasty.

With the Cushites firmly ensconced in Memphis, their kings rightfully became the pharaohs of Egypt. In a sense, these Nubian kings ruled two kingdoms: Cush, based at Napata, and Egypt, based at Memphis. This double kingship is reflected in Cushite royal iconography, in which Napatan kings wear crowns with a double cobra (uraeus). In 664, however, the





In the Shadow of the Pyramid

Nuri excavations, with Taharqa's pyramid in the background.

JAMES K. HOFFMEIER

Renewed excavations at the site of Nuri in northern Sudan began in 2017—before the start of Sudan's recent conflict (p. 26)—under Pearce Paul Creasman, Executive Director of the American Center of Research (ACOR) in Amman, Jordan. As part of the project, I was involved in excavating a temple near the pyramid of Taharqa that the pioneering American archaeologist George Reisner had uncovered a century earlier. Unfortunately, Reisner did not fully document or analyze the temple's carved reliefs, nor was he able to offer a date for its construction.

Since Reisner never discovered Taharqa's funerary temple, we think this nearby edifice may have served that purpose. Our initial work focused on relocating and clearing the building, as it had been completely covered by sand during the past century, and we are currently studying the decorated walls. So far, no royal name has been identified in the reliefs. Dating the temple, therefore, remains a challenge. We also cannot yet confirm the temple belonged to Taharqa, although we have not ruled that out either. If this temple did, indeed, serve Taharqa's funerary cult, it also continued to be used by subsequent kings. Unlike Egyptian funerary temples, which often include historical texts and battle reliefs, no similar documentation exists in the Cushite necropolis, meaning its walls will likely never reveal how Taharqa remembered the campaign he led against Assyria in 701 BC.

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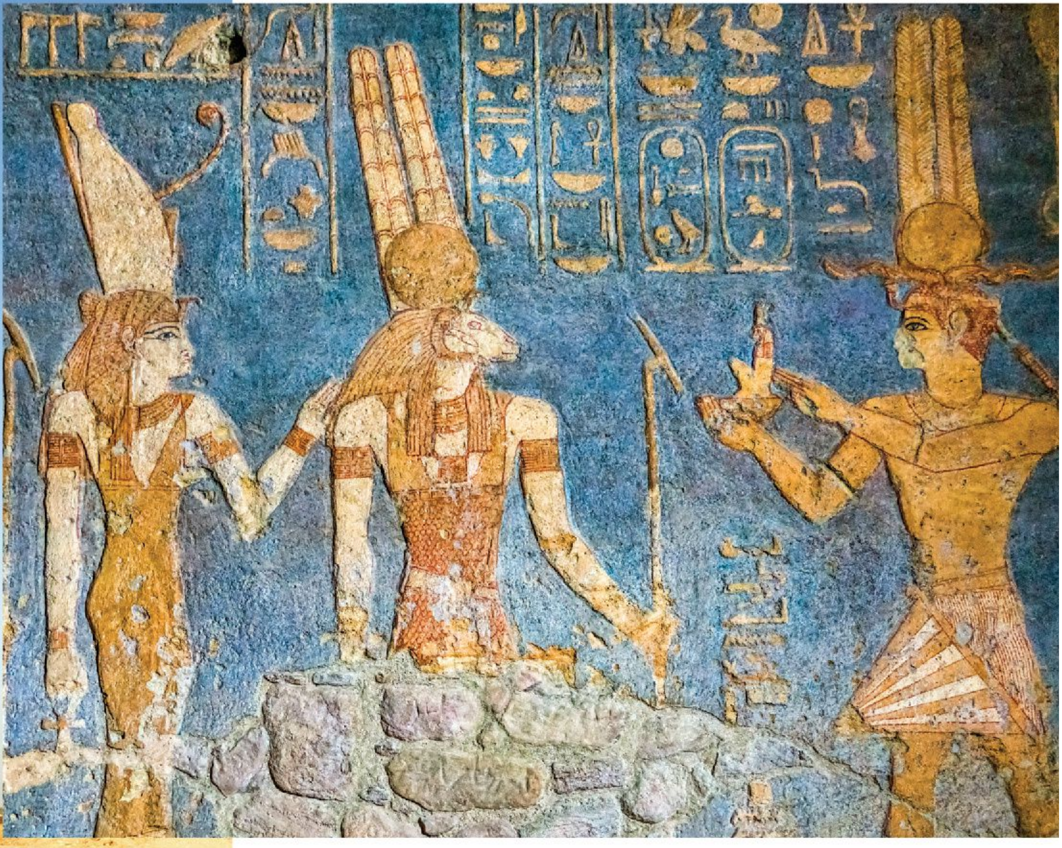
Assyrians drove the Cushite rulers out of Egypt, returning the Cushite kingdom to its original borders in Nubia and effectively bringing the 25th Dynasty to an end.

With this context in mind, we now turn to what we know of Taharqa's life and achievements. Taharqa was a younger son of the great king Piankhy. He ruled for more than a quarter century (690–664 BC) and was a prolific builder. In Nubia, he built Egyptian-style temples with pylons and pillared halls at Jebel Barkal and Kawa. One of his most stunning temples was devoted to the goddess Mut, the consort of Amun-Re. It was carved into the sandstone walls of Jebel Barkal and beautifully painted. Similarly, at the temple of Karnak in Thebes, Taharqa built a sanctuary beside the sacred lake as well as other smaller chapels, although his most prominent structure was a colonnade that now stands between the temple's first and second pylons.

In addition, Taharqa abandoned the ancestral necropolis at El-Kurru for Nuri, a site on the other side of the Nile about 5 miles upstream from Jebel Barkal. There, he built the largest pyramid in Nubia (see "In the Shadow of the Pyramid," p. 45). Currently standing nearly 70 feet tall, the pyramid may have originally soared to a height of more than 165 feet. Nuri remained the royal burial ground until the end of the Napatan period in the late fourth century BC. Nearly two dozen pyramids from this time survive, and scholars estimate that as many as 80 may have once filled the necropolis.

Historians agree that Taharqa, the greatest of the Napatan kings, ruled from 690 to 664 BC. So how do we explain his presence in Judah in support of Hezekiah in 701 BC, more than a decade



BARON REZNIK/AISLE SEAT PLEASE

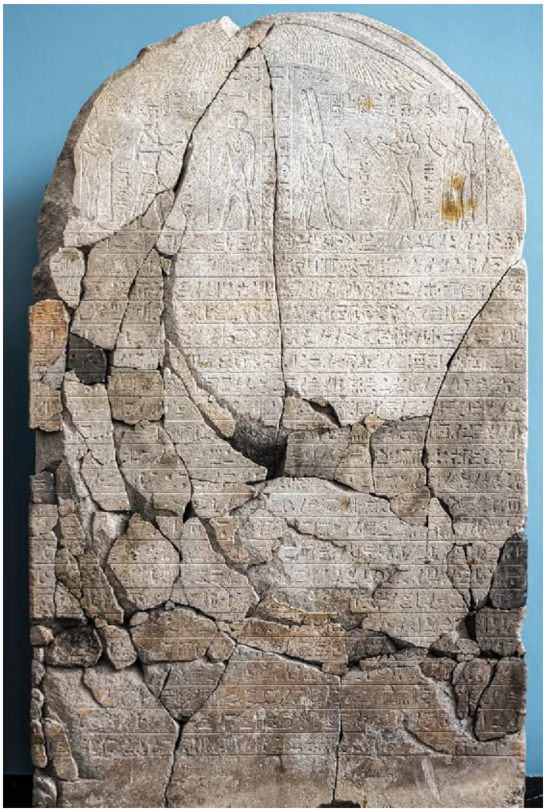
HOLY MOUNTAIN. The Cushite kings adopted many elements of Egyptian culture, including the hieroglyphic script, artistic styles, and religion. When the New Kingdom pharaohs, who ruled from Thebes, founded the city of Napata in c. 1450 BC, they also established a temple to the Theban god Amun-Re at a striking site known today as Jebel Barkal. Later Napatan kings developed this area into an ever-growing monumental complex of sanctuaries built around and inside the isolated sandstone mountain. In the 680s, King Taharqa built a temple there dedicated to Mut, the divine consort of Amun-Re (left). Recently restored reliefs inside the temple (above) show Taharqa (at right) making an offering to the ram-headed god Amun, who is followed by the goddess Mut.

before his coronation? Scholars have long puzzled over this question, with some arguing the biblical references to Tirhaqah are anachronistic, since Egyptian chronology places another Nubian pharaoh, Shebitku, on the throne at that time.[1] But common sense and the evidence from historical and textual sources suggest otherwise.

First, as the late Egyptologist Kenneth Kitchen pointed out, the biblical authors clearly wrote their account of Sennacherib's invasion at least a decade into Taharqa's reign, since they also reference Sennacherib's assassination in 680 BC (2 Kings 19:37; Isaiah 37:38). Thus, even though Taharqa was the Egyptian pharaoh when they were writing, the authors were presumably well aware he was not yet pharaoh in 701. By way of analogy, when one says that Queen Elizabeth II was born in 1926, they are not claiming she was also queen at that time, only that she eventually became queen. The biblical references to Taharqa are therefore proleptic, not anachronistic.[2]

Second, we know the Cushites practiced a type of collateral succession, in which the king was succeeded first by his brother, then by his eldest son, and finally by his younger son. King Piankhy died in 716, meaning Taharqa must have been born at least a few years earlier, making him about 20 years old in 701. His uncle Shabaka assumed the throne in 716, followed next by Piankhy's eldest son, Shebitku, in 702. Thus, during the reigns of Shabaka and Shebitku, Taharqa was a crown prince, only ascending to the throne upon Shebitku's death in 690. This may explain why the biblical writers identify him as king of Cush rather than pharaoh.

Third, several of Taharqa's own royal stelae, discovered at the temple of Kawa, confirm this



HELPING HEZEKIAH. **Although the Bible tells of Taharqa coming to the aid of Hezekiah in 701 BC, he did not become king until 690. Two royal stelae excavated in the forecourt of Temple T at the site of Kawa in northern Sudan clarify this seeming confusion. Stela IV, now in Khartoum, recounts that Taharqa came to northern Egypt to command his brother's army. Stela V (right), now in Copenhagen, adds that this event took place when Taharqa was "a young man of 20 years." From these inscriptions, one can conclude that in 701, Taharqa led an army to Judah on behalf of his brother, King Shebitku, while still only the crown prince of Egypt.**

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situation. These stelae, erected sometime after Taharqa ascended the throne, telescope a number of episodes from earlier in his career, including when he served as crown prince under his older brother, King Shebitku. For example, the text on Stela IV, dated to Taharqa's sixth year (685 BC), tells us that he was summoned from Napata to Memphis by his elder brother, "his majesty King Shebitku," and that he had with him "his majesty's army." The intent of this troop movement under Taharqa's leadership (in service to his elder brother) apparently was for taking military action against Assyria in 701 BC. Similarly, in Stela V, Taharqa recalls that this event happened when he was 20 years old (which proves he was not a child in 701 BC, as some have argued). Taken together, these stelae confirm Taharqa's critical role in Shebitku's northern campaign against Assyria, even though he was still crown prince at the time.

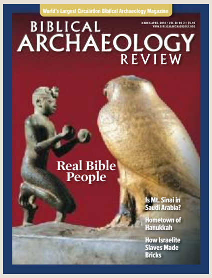
Finally, it is notable that in the Hebrew Bible, Tirhaqah is only called "king of Cush" (*melek kush*) and not "pharaoh." Other Egyptian rulers from the eighth to sixth centuries BC are identified in the Bible as pharaohs, particularly Necho (2 Kings 23:33–34; Jeremiah 46:2) and Apries (Hophra, in Jeremiah 44:30). The absence of any reference to Tirhaqah as "pharaoh" again suggests the biblical writers understood that in 701 BC Taharqa was simply a Cushite prince who perhaps ruled Cush on behalf of Pharaoh Shebitku in Memphis and thus was called "king of Cush."

The timing of Taharqa's campaign against Sennacherib might have been motivated by Egypt's desire to take preemptive action to thwart any further Assyrian advance on Egypt. Pharaoh Shebitku clearly understood that if Judah and Philistia were conquered, Egypt would be the next domino to fall. The evidence suggests that Taharqa, while still a 20-year-old prince of Nubia, led a Cushite-Egyptian force to Judah on behalf of his brother, King Shebitku.

The full impact of the battle between the Cushite-Egyptian and Assyrian armies is uncertain. While Sennacherib's annals claim to have defeated Taharqa's army and taken prisoners, neither the Bible nor Cushite inscriptions offer any information about the outcome. There is no doubt, however, that Hezekiah benefited from this military engagement, as it certainly distracted the Assyrian war machine from its siege of Jerusalem and may have contributed to Judah's ultimate survival. ◘

50 YEARS FLASHBACK

2014: The Real King Taharqa



The cover of **BAR**'s March/April 2014 issue featured King Taharqa (shown as a small statue making an offering to the falcon-god Hemen) as one of 50 people from the Bible whose existence has been confirmed through archaeology. The associated article, "Archaeology Confirms 50 Real People in the Bible," was the first in a series written by acclaimed historian Lawrence Mykytiuk that examined historical evidence for biblical figures ranging from King David to Jesus. The series, which became a reader favorite, ultimately identified 83 "real people" from the Bible. ◘

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[1] M.F. Laming Macadam, who discovered and originally published the Kawa stelae, maintained that Taharqa was only eight years old in 701 BC. See *The Temples of Kawa, I. The Inscriptions* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1949), p. xii.

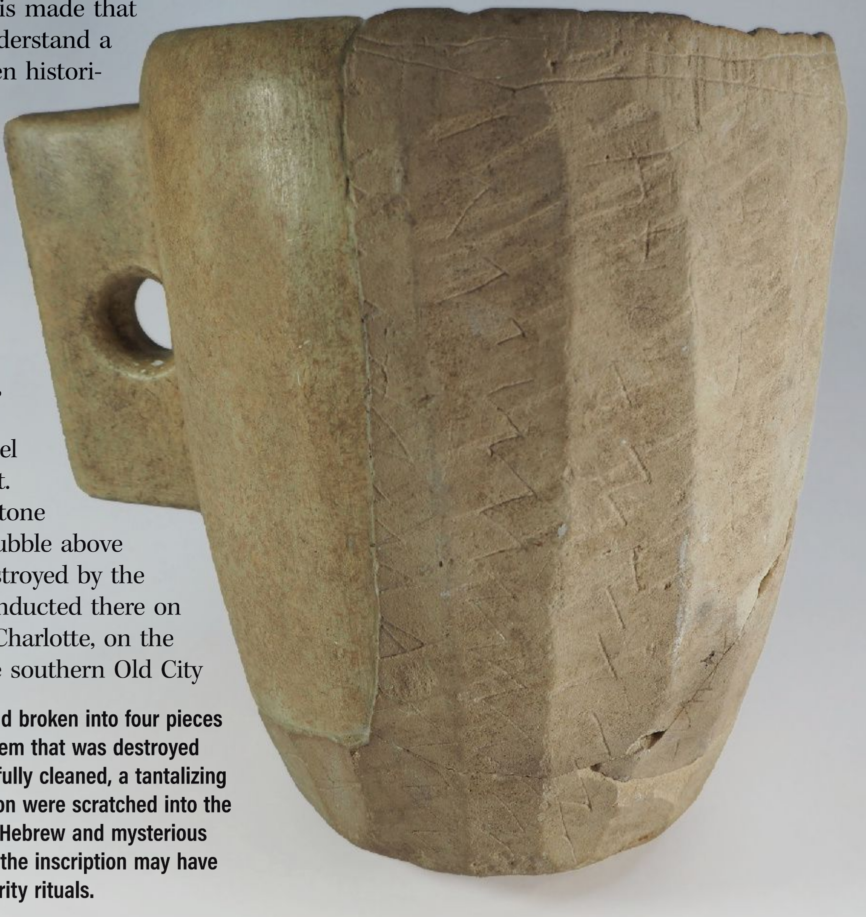
[2] Kenneth A. Kitchen, "The Kawa Stelae of Taharqa," in K. Lawson Younger, ed., *Context of Scripture IV* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 18–19.

The Mysterious Mount Zion Mug

SHIMON GIBSON

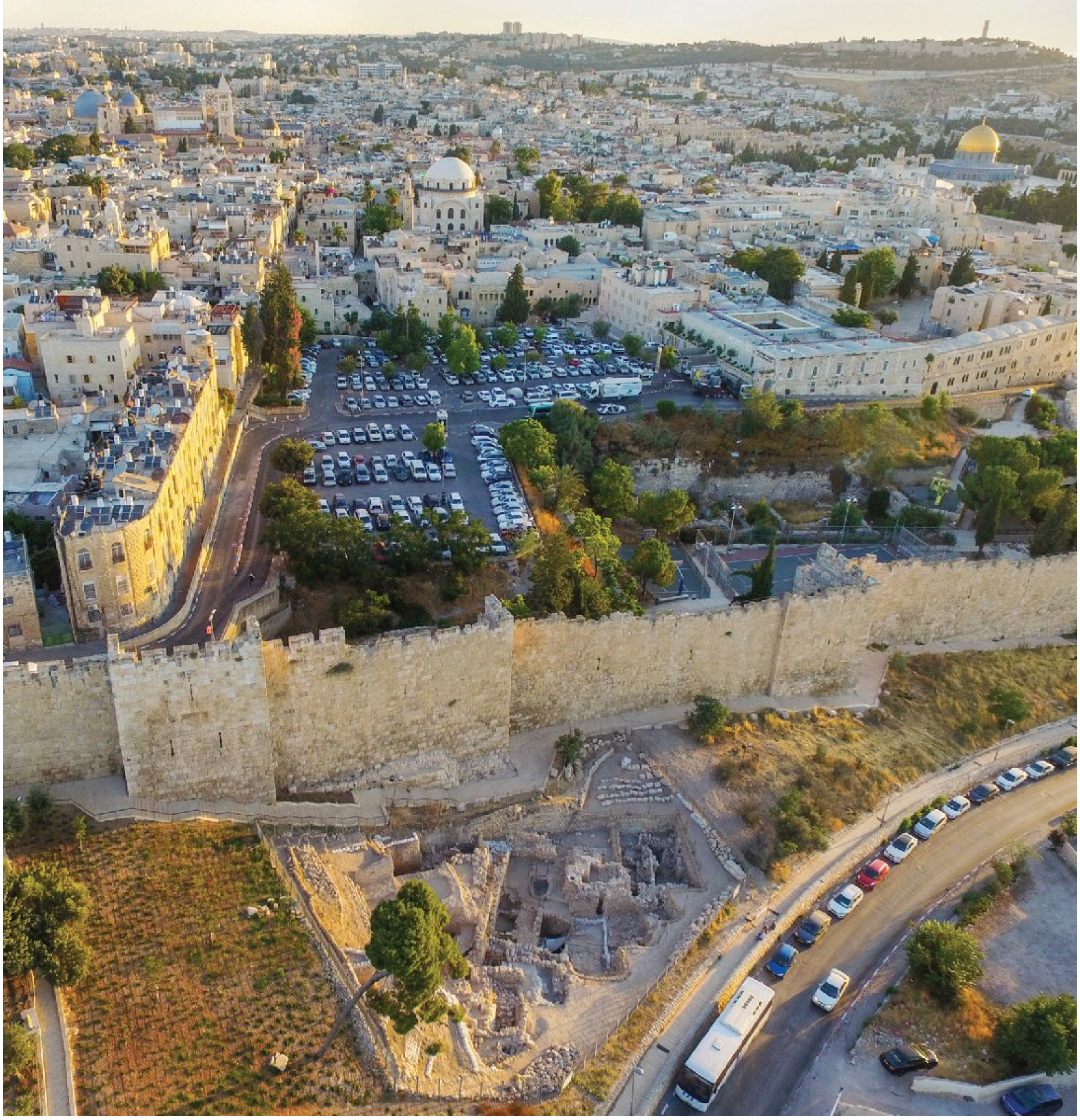
OCCASIONALLY IN ARCHAEOLOGY, a discovery is made that has the potential to change how scholars understand a certain aspect of material culture from a given historical period. Inscriptions are often deemed one of the best kinds of finds and can excite even the most jaded archaeologists. One such discovery, from an excavation conducted on the traditional Mt. Zion in Jerusalem, is an inscribed stone mug dating from the first century CE, with some of the writing resembling cryptic scripts previously known only from the Dead Sea Scrolls. Can this mysterious inscription be read, and if so, what does it say?

"Shimon, you have to see this," cried out Joel Kramer, one of the area supervisors at our Mt. Zion dig in June 2009, when fragments of a stone vessel appeared from the ground in layered rubble above the Jewish ritual pool (*mikveh*) of a house destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE. Excavations were being conducted there on behalf of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, on the upper slope of Mt. Zion, in the shadow of the southern Old City



UNC CHARLOTTE MOUNT ZION EXPEDITION / SHIMON GIBSON

CURIOUS CUP. This 6-inch-tall limestone mug was found broken into four pieces in the remains of a lavish Herodian-era home in Jerusalem that was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE. Once the fragments were carefully cleaned, a tantalizing feature appeared: numerous lines of a spidery inscription were scratched into the pared facets of the mug's exterior. Using both ordinary Hebrew and mysterious cryptic symbols known also from the Dead Sea Scrolls, the inscription may have facilitated incantatory chanting used in early Jewish purity rituals.



UNC CHARLOTTE MOUNT ZION EXPEDITION / SHIMON GIBSON

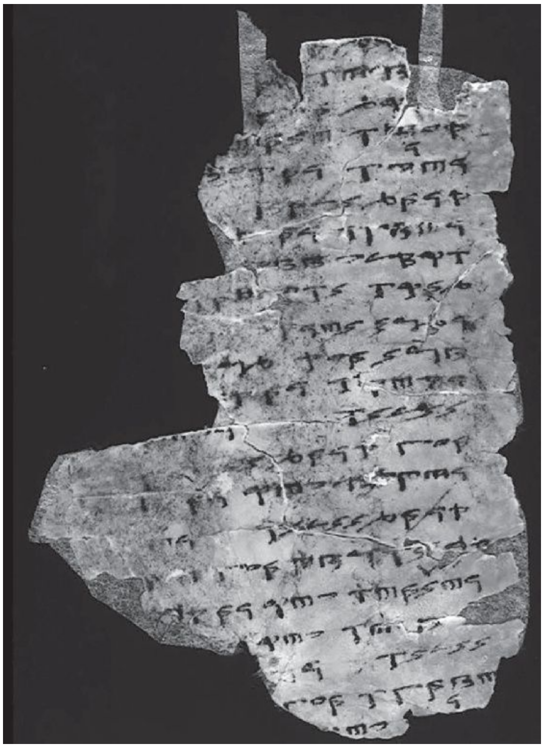
DIGGING OUTSIDE THE WALL. The inscribed mug was found in 2009 during excavations in the area of Mt. Zion, located just outside of the Old City walls on the eastern edge of Jerusalem's western hill, a mere 150 yards east of Zion Gate. During the Herodian period (first century BCE–first century CE), this area of Jerusalem expanded significantly, with many wealthy families building substantial estates in the vicinity. Visible beyond the site's excavation trenches and the southern wall of the Old City are familiar Jerusalem landmarks, including the two gray domes of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (top left), the Dome of the Rock (top right), and the impressive domed Hurva Synagogue (top center).

wall, and only a short distance from Zion Gate (see "Real Households of Jerusalem," p. 54).[1]

Such 2,000-year-old stone vessels are common finds in Jerusalem, particularly in early Roman strata, but this one seemed especially unusual. It had a series of scratched markings not only along its rim but also within the parallel rows of vertical knife-pared facets carved along its face. The mug, about 6 inches in height and made of soft white limestone, was found broken into four pieces, with the base and internal walls smoothed. Careful cleaning was necessary, and upon removing the thin layer of adhering soil, spidery writing became visible along most of its 20 pared facets.[2]

The next task was to make a meticulous drawing of all the visible inscribed letters (estimated at around 100). It became evident that this was indeed an inscription, though not a straightforward one. Strangely, the writing was incised within the length of the mug's vertical facets, which required the mug to be tipped on one side for proper reading. Much effort must have been dedicated to making the inscription in the first place—many hours of hard work, I would guess. Most of the incised letters did not seem obviously identifiable as Hebrew or Aramaic script, and there were no spaces or word dividers. Also, a couple of rows of repetitive zigzag incisions cut along the lower facets of the mug seemed discouraging at first glance. Could this just be a succession of meaningless signs, rather than a valid, decipherable text?

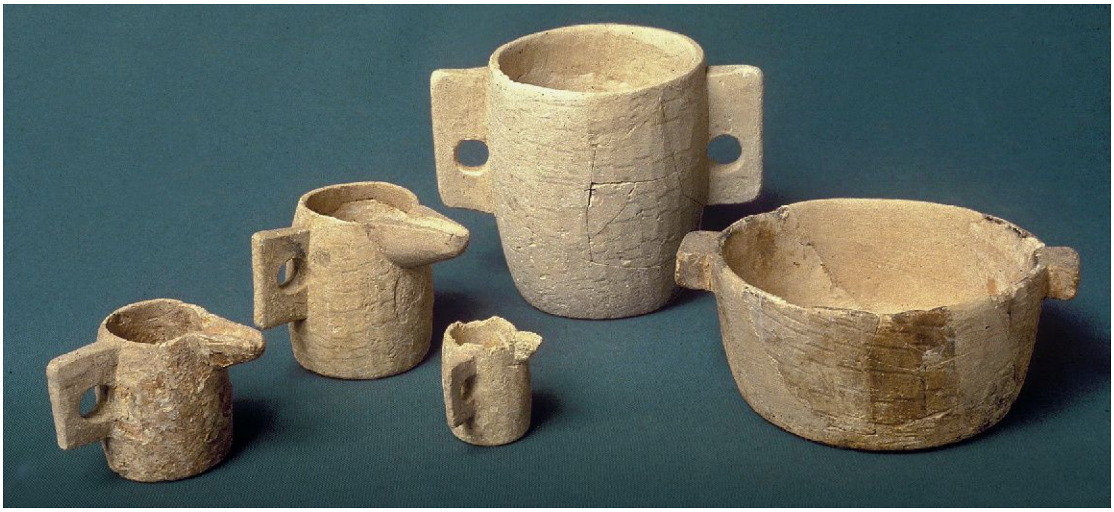
MYSTERIOUS MARKINGS. Analysis of the inscription on the stone mug revealed that some of the incised letters resemble those of the so-called Cryptic A script known from the Dead Sea Scrolls, including this 5-inch fragment that is part of a calendrical text (4Q317, also known as 4QcryptA Lunisolar Calendar). The obscure script uses altered letter-forms or even entirely different symbols to write the Hebrew alphabet, perhaps for the purpose of encoding privileged or secret information.


COURTESY OF THE LEON LEVY DEAD SEA SCROLLS DIGITAL LIBRARY, ISRAEL ANTIQUITIES AUTHORITY / PHOTO: SHAI HALEVI

Decipherment was certainly not going to be straightforward. After careful restoration in the conservation laboratory of the Israel Museum supervised by curator Dudi Mevorah, the mug was then photographed using various cameras and different sets of lighting equipment to enhance the fine, delicate writing and facilitate the decipherment process. Indeed, our examination of the inscribed facets under enhanced lighting revealed that the lettering had obviously been done very carefully by a skilled hand—these were not random or haphazard scrawled markings. The scribe likely used a stylus or a small nail with a very fine tip. Carving such small letters (each one no more than a third of an inch in height) in the narrow and slightly curving facets of the stone mug would have been no easy task. The person who made the inscription must have been an expert engraver.

Attempts to decipher the inscription soon began. Stephen Pfann, of the University of the Holy Land in Jerusalem, was the first scholar to attempt a decipherment of the mysterious inscription. He seemed an ideal candidate for the task, having completed a doctoral study on the paleography of cryptic scripts in the Dead Sea Scrolls. He began studying the inscribed mug by photographing it using Reflectance Transformation Imaging,* which enabled him to examine high-definition images of individual letters under different lighting conditions. The aim was to eliminate from his analysis any random scratches or damage on the surface of the vessel, likely

* See Todd R. Hanneken, "Archaeological Views: Digital Archaeology's New Frontiers," **BAR**, March/April 2017.


ZEV RADOVAN / BIBLELANDPICTURES.COM

ROCK-SOLID RITUAL. Many stone vessels like the Mt. Zion mug, dating roughly to the first century CE, have been discovered in Jerusalem and its environs. Although the size and form of these vessels can vary (some have handles; others have spouts and handles), they are typically made of chalky limestone with an outer facing of pared facets. During the Herodian period, such stone vessels were likely used for hand-washing or other purity-related ritual practices.

caused when it was originally broken, probably during the destruction of the city in 70 CE.

In 2010, Pfann initially identified three distinct types of script in the inscription: (1) letters resembling the Cryptic A script (or “Hieratic Hebrew”) previously observed in certain Qumran scrolls; (2) a cryptic script specific to this inscription, though it bore similarities to certain Qumran characters; and (3) a few words in plainer Jewish Aramaic script that referenced the God of Israel. Among the latter, he read the partial phrase “*Adonai, shabti*,” translated as “Lord, I have returned,” but unfortunately the remaining words of the expression are unclear. Pfann proposed it might be a paraphrase of Psalm 26:8: *Adonai ahabti me‘on beteka*, “Lord, I love the dwelling of your house,” with the verb *ahabti* (“I loved”) changed to *shabti* (“I have returned, repented”). He also noted the inscription’s repeated use of the letter *tsade*, interpreting it as deriving from the divine title *tseba’ot* (“[Lord of] hosts”).

Regarding the inscription’s mixed scripts, Pfann pointed to examples from the Dead Sea Scrolls (4Q186 Horoscope, 4Q259Se, 4Q324e Liturgical Calendar), where cryptic scripts were occasionally employed as specialized forms of writing to encode certain texts. These scripts deviate from the standard Hebrew alphabet, employing altered letterforms or completely unique characters. Several distinct cryptic scripts, such as Cryptic A and Cryptic B, have been identified, and some scholars believe they might have been added to conceal information from outsiders or to reserve certain knowledge for initiated members of the Qumran community. Pfann demonstrated that these scripts often appear in documents related to esoteric teachings or sensitive information, such as calendrical systems or interpretations of sacred law. He also deduced that cryptic scripts were used within the Jewish priesthood of the time. This led him to suggest that the scribe of the Mt. Zion mug intentionally mixed different scripts to make the inscription difficult to read.[3]

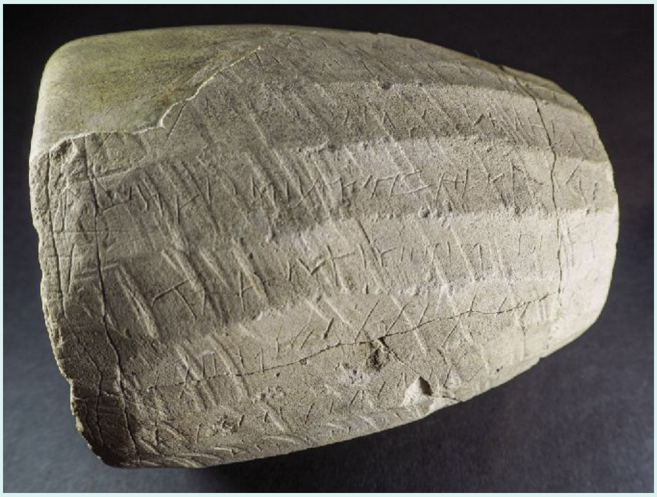
In recent years, the inscription has been studied anew by David Hamidović of the University

Deciphering the Inscription

DAVID HAMIDOVIĆ

After the discovery of the inscribed stone mug in 2009, it was initially studied by Stephen Pfann, who published a preliminary study. Since then, however, scholars have largely ignored this intriguing find. I became fascinated by this artifact and resolved to conduct my own paleographical study.[1]

Although the incised writing is coarser than what we might expect in a manuscript, the inscription was likely created by a single scribe. Deciphering the inscription is admittedly difficult, not due to the quality of the incisions, but because of the diversity of script types present: among them the so-called Cryptic A script, similar to that seen in the Qumran manuscripts, as well as Paleo-Hebrew and Aramaic (also known as square Hebrew). Building on Pfann’s preliminary decipherment, I propose the following reading of the cup’s inscription (with *vacat* noting the lack of writing in facets 1, 17, and 20):



UNC CHARLOTTE MOUNT ZION EXPEDITION / SHIMON GIBSON

The stone mug reveals incised writing along most of its 20 pared facets.

vacat	1	*vacat*
תתתת צצצ[צ]	2	TTTT ṢṢṢ[Ṣ]
תת צצצצ ה[ה]	3	TT ṢṢṢṢ H[H]
ת הההה ייי צצצצצ	4	T HHHH YYY ṢṢṢṢṢ
אדוני שבתי הארצ הצ	5	O Adonai, my seat (is) the earth HṢ
הההה/צצ צצצצצצ	6	HHHH/ṢṢ ṢṢṢṢṢṢ
הוהי ההוההההא צצצ	7	HWHY HHWHHHH’ ṢṢṢ
צצצצצצצ	8	ṢṢṢṢṢṢṢ
צצצצצצצצצ	9	ṢṢṢṢṢṢṢṢṢ
צצצצצצצצצצ	10	ṢṢṢṢṢṢṢṢṢṢ
צצצצצצ	11	ṢṢṢṢṢṢ
etc. צ	12	Ṣ etc.
etc. צ	13	Ṣ etc.
[...] ב	14	B[...]
[...] צ	15	Ṣ[...]
[...] ת	16	T[...]
vacat	17	*vacat*
[...] ושצ	18	WŠṢ[...]
[צ]	19	[Ṣ]
vacat	20	*vacat*

POURING FOR PURITY. The lavish residence where the inscribed mug was found featured a remarkably well-preserved *mikveh* (ritual pool) with steps leading down into a basin for immersion. It's possible that the inscribed mug was used in water purification rituals, or it might even have been used to carry ritually pure water from the home's cistern to the *mikveh*.

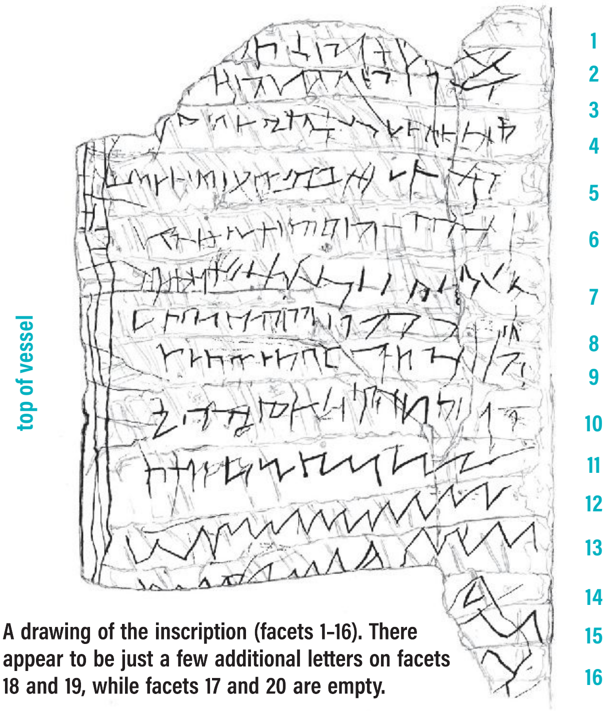
UNC CHARLOTTE MOUNT ZION EXPEDITION / SHIMON GIBSON

of Lausanne in Switzerland, who compared it to later incantation and amulet texts (see "Deciphering the Inscription," below). While Hamidović's reading differs in some details from the one proposed by Pfann—most significantly, he reads *shibti* "my seat/throne" instead of Pfann's *shabti* "I have returned, repented"—it nonetheless conveys the essential elements of this admittedly challenging text.

But what was the functional purpose of this mysterious inscription, and why was it cut into the side of this specific type of stone vessel? Such vessels, typically described as mugs or cups, are handmade and decorated with vertical facets along their sides. They often feature two handles and occasionally a spout. Many similar vessels (though uninscribed) have been uncovered in archaeological layers in Jerusalem dating from the first century CE. I have surmised that they were likely used for hand-washing in certain Jewish private homes, though this was not necessarily a routine activity in *all* Jewish households of the time.[4]

The inscription is similar to later incantation and curse texts, which often feature seemingly meaningless words or letters known as *nomina barbara.* However, this text is unusual because it contains no requests or personal names. This inscription, found in situ in a first-century CE archaeological context, sheds new light on the use of *nomina barbara* in reference to the Tetragrammaton and, more broadly, the substitution of theonyms and the divine epithet *tseba'ot* ("[Lord of] hosts"). Indeed, the scribe appears to manipulate the form of the letter *tsade* in the first two scripts, demonstrating a high degree of mastery in the art of writing. Additionally, the inscription can be compared to later amulets containing sequences of multiple *tsade*s, suggesting the existence of an incantatory tradition. The Mt. Zion inscription may serve as a missing link between the divine epithet "YHWH *tseba'ot*" in the Hebrew Bible and its use in later incantations.

I believe the absence of a request or personal name points to the mug's ritual use. It is unsurprising, therefore, that it was unearthed in an elite Jewish home, complete with a *mikveh*, a bathtub, and a nearby water cistern. Several mishnaic texts (m. *Yadayim* 1:2; *Parah* 3:2; *Betzah* 2:3; t. *Shabbat* 17:1) and the Gospel of John (2:6–7) attest to rites involving water contained in a vessel. The limestone mug may have been used to transport small amounts of pure water from the cistern to the nearby *mikveh*. The inscription invoking YHWH's power was probably intended to preserve this water from possible contamination and thus to guarantee its purity when it was eventually deposited in the ritual pool. In this context, the letters associated with the Tetragrammaton and the divine epithet *tseba'ot* could be seen as a request for divine protection to ensure the water's purity.



A drawing of the inscription (facets 1-16). There appear to be just a few additional letters on facets 18 and 19, while facets 17 and 20 are empty.

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[1] David Hamidović, "La coupe à l'inscription 'cryptique' du mont Sion à Jérusalem: des théonymes au rite," in Sylvain Lebreton and Thomas Galoppin, eds., *Divine Names on the Spot, III: Divine Names and Agency in Ancient Greek and West Semitic Texts* (Louvain: Peeters, 2025), pp. 53–75.

Real Households of Jerusalem

SHIMON GIBSON, RAFAEL Y. LEWIS, JAMES D. TABOR,
AND **STEVE PATTERSON**

The inscribed stone mug was found during excavations on the upper east slope of the traditional Mt. Zion, not far from Zion Gate in the southern wall of Jerusalem's Old City. The site is located in a garden area that was part of the green belt established by the British in the 1920s to surround the Old City from the south. Sponsored by the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, the project has been ongoing since 2006. The project's intensive stratigraphic work and architectural analysis have resulted in the discovery of a wide range of archaeological remains dating from a variety of periods, from as early as the Iron Age (seventh–sixth centuries BCE) and as late as Ottoman times.[1]

The stone mug was found in the rubble of a large Second Temple period building complex that extends well beyond the limits of our excavation. It was probably built to a height of at least two stories, with a basement level that consisted of several rooms extending off of a courtyard. These rooms included a *mikveh* (see p. 53) with an intact barrel-vaulted ceiling, a bathroom with a complete plastered bathtub, and a deep cistern. Rooms unearthed to the west included a bakery with three circular ovens. The upper stories were lavishly decorated, as evidenced by numerous fragments of molded stucco, large chunks of fallen, multicolored wall paintings in Pompeian style (a rare find in Israel), and an exquisitely carved stone window screen. Small finds included a great variety of ceramic, stone, and glass vessels, one bowl bearing a molded Greek inscription, a bronze ladle for serving wine, and a well-preserved gold aureus coin minted early in the reign of Emperor Nero (54–68 CE).

Our building closely resembles the "mansions" previously identified in the 1970s in excavations in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City. Based on our data, it appears our building was built as the domicile of a priestly family or Jewish aristocrat in the first century BCE, more precisely near the end of that century during the reign of Herod the Great. Judging by the finds, the building remained in use throughout the first century CE until it was destroyed by the Romans in 70.

The discovery of a unique inscribed stone mug, which likely belonged to a member of this wealthy household, is truly exciting. But to whom exactly did it belong? Was it a member of the Jewish priestly or aristocratic family who lived there, or perhaps one of the servants or household staff? We may never know for certain, and the mystery of the writing on the stone mug will continue to puzzle and challenge us.

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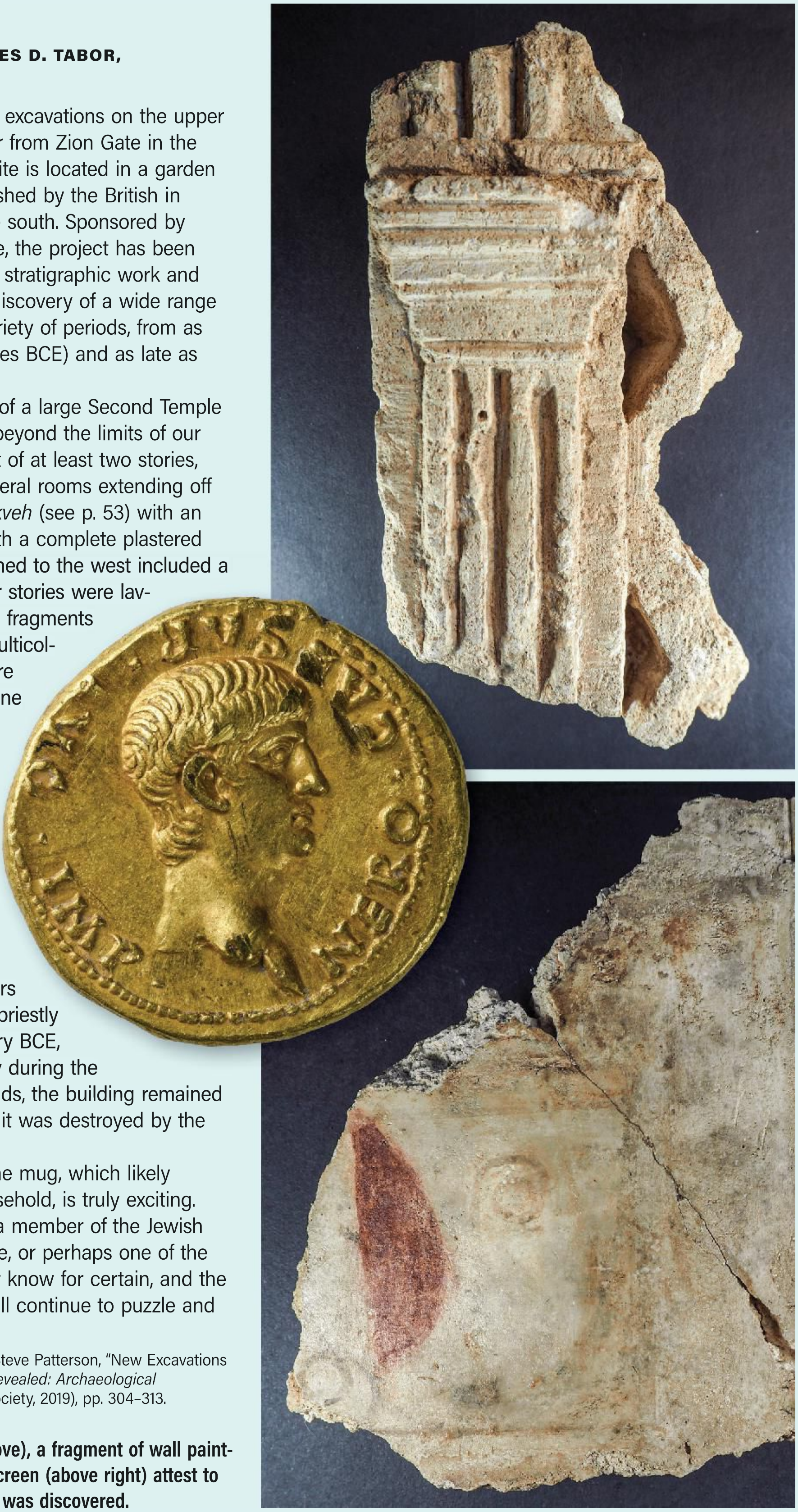
[1] Shimon Gibson, James D. Tabor, Rafael Y. Lewis, and Steve Patterson, "New Excavations on Mount Zion," in Hillel Geva, ed., *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed: Archaeological Discoveries, 1998–2018* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2019), pp. 304–313.



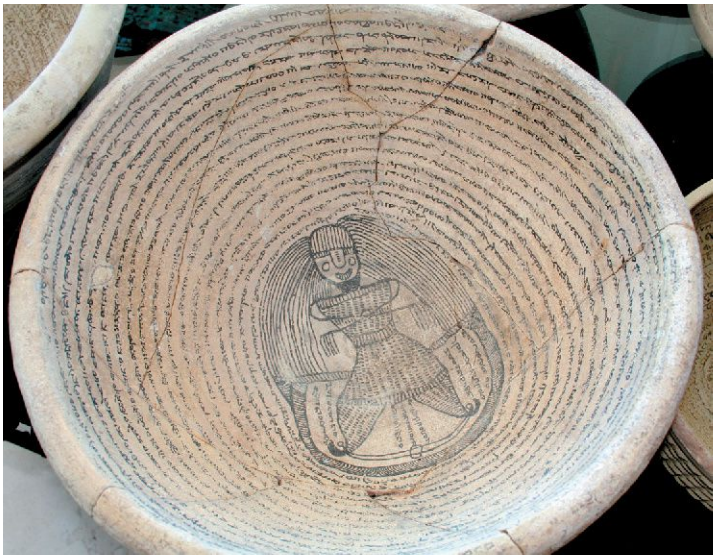
A coin minted by the Roman Emperor Nero (above), a fragment of wall painting (right), and a piece of a sculpted window screen (above right) attest to the luxury of the home in which the stone mug was discovered.

ALL THREE PHOTOS: UNC CHARLOTTE MOUNT ZION EXPEDITION / SHIMON GIBSON

If the text written on the vessel was spoken aloud or used during prayers, it is possible that some of the repeated markings (including the repeated *tsade*s) might have served as notations, perhaps as a guide to chanting, especially when invoking the divine name. Elevated prayer, accompanied by occasional chanting, was a religious prerogative dating back to very early days, aimed at lifting devoted Jewish individuals as close as possible to the divine. Originally, the regularity and tonality of chanting were likely transmitted from one believer to another through rote learning. However, this aspect may eventually have been recorded using scripted signs, likely in the form of a string of words and individual letters seen as divinely inspired. The goal of regularized chanting was to achieve a level of meditative inner contemplation, with specific markings possibly signifying the moments when a chanting voice should be raised or lowered accordingly. Hence, it is conceivable that some of the letters or signs on our mug may have functioned as rudimentary musical notations (*neumes*), intended to facilitate the rhythm of chanting during prayer or specific ceremonies associated with water sprinkling and other purification practices.

Another possibility is that the mug was used in Jewish magic. Very little is known about the physical conduct of magic in first-century Judea, except that it was likely deeply intertwined with popular religious beliefs and practices, some of which may have been associated with the process of water ritual purification. Many centuries later, in the Byzantine period, magic involved the use of amulets, typically worn as pendants or carried, and incantation bowls inscribed with warning texts to trap or ward off demons. Practitioners often drew upon biblical texts, especially Psalms, and invoked the names of angels and of God. Magic was used to ward off evil spirits, cure illnesses, and ensure success in various endeavors.

In first-century Jerusalem, Jewish religious practices were closely intertwined with rituals of purity and sanctification. These practices often involved repeated bodily immersion in water within stepped, plastered pools (*mikva'ot*) located in the basements of houses, as well as the daily use of stone vessels, sometimes also involving water, in both domestic and public settings. It is noteworthy that despite the challenges of procuring water in Jerusalem, certain water-libation rites were practiced in the Temple and at the nearby Siloam Pool. Such rites stand out as significant markers of the importance of ritual observance within the "City of God." These practices, rooted in the need to maintain bodily purity at all costs, likely extended beyond the mundane, intersecting with the mystical and magical, and reflected the intricate religious landscape of first-century Judea. Therefore, the inscribed mug found at Mt. Zion, which probably served as an amulet-like vessel used to secure divine blessing, sheds new light on early Jewish water-libation rituals, their connection to Jewish magic, and the invocations, chanting, and prayers that were likely associated with them.



HERSHEL SHANKS

SECRET SPELLS. It is possible that the inscribed stone mug was used in ancient Jewish magic. Little is known about such practices, but Byzantine-period incantation bowls like the one shown here are a relatively common indicator that they took place. In this example (not from Mt. Zion), the incantation is written in Aramaic spiraling inward toward the center of the bowl, where the demon is depicted with hands and feet bound.

This article is dedicated to the memory of BAR's founding editor, Hershel Shanks, who was deeply excited when the inscribed mug was first discovered and always wanted an article about it for the magazine.

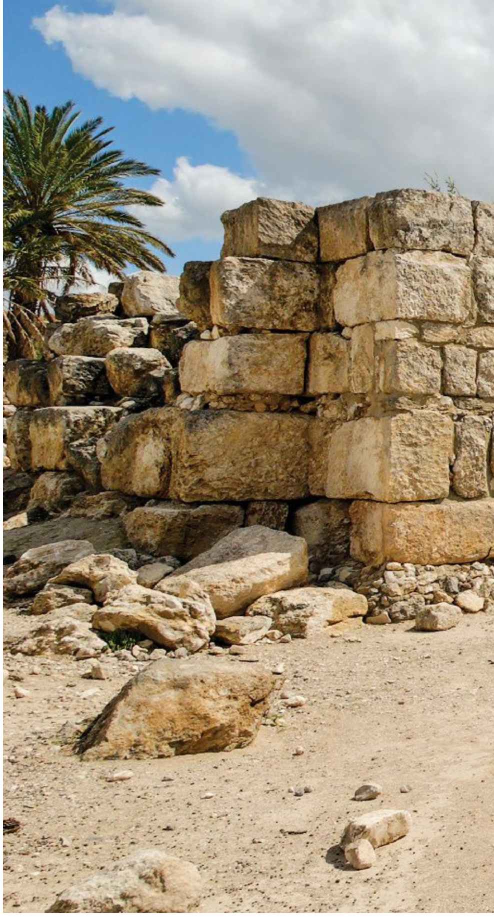
[1] Work was directed by Shimon Gibson, James D. Tabor, Rafael Y. Lewis, and Steve Patterson. For a preliminary study on the mug and its discovery, see Shimon Gibson, "New Excavations on Mount Zion in Jerusalem and an Inscribed Stone Cup/Mug from the Second Temple Period," in David Amit, Orit Peleg-Barkat, and Guy D. Steibel, eds., *New Studies in the Archaeology of Jerusalem and Its Region* (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2010), pp. *32–*43.

[2] We are grateful to Mareike Grosser, the project's finds curator, who carefully cleaned the mug after its discovery.

[3] Stephen Pfann, "The Mount Zion Inscribed Cup: Preliminary Observations," in David Amit, Orit Peleg-Barkat, and Guy D. Steibel, eds., *New Studies in the Archaeology of Jerusalem and Its Region* (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2010), pp. *44–*85.

[4] Shimon Gibson, "Common and Uncommon Jewish Purity Concerns in City and Village in Early Roman Palestine and the Flourishing of the Stone Vessel Industry: A Summary and Discussion," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 53 (2022), pp. 157–197.

NEW DIRECTIONS



Dating Game

How Archaeologists Date the Biblical Past

YOAV VAKNIN

SINCE ITS INCEPTION, biblical archaeology has been especially concerned with dating the sites, buildings, artifacts, and written records uncovered through excavation. In many cases, assigning dates to material remains has been essential for associating them with particular events, peoples, and places mentioned in the Bible.

Accordingly, archaeologists have developed a range of methods and techniques to pinpoint when in time these remains were created, used, or destroyed. Not surprisingly, however, none of these methods is perfect, which means scholars are ever debating chronological issues and working to develop more precise dating methods.

The chronology of the Iron Age (c. 1200–586 BCE) in particular has attracted much scholarly attention and debate, because this period is most closely associated with the biblical text and its historical interpretation. The debate focuses mainly on the tenth and ninth centuries, with archaeologists generally supporting either the more traditional "high" chronology, which dates specific pottery types and monumental architecture to the time of David and Solomon in the tenth century, or the "low" chronology, which dates these same remains to the ninth century. Beyond this much-debated issue, there is also uncertainty in securely dating some archaeological remains from the eighth to the fifth centuries. In particular, radiocarbon dating for this period usually produces date ranges spanning several centuries, making it nearly impossible to date archaeological remains with any precision.

Here, I briefly review the uses (and limitations) of several dating methods, including my own specialty, archaeomagnetism, which I believe can significantly improve our understanding of Iron Age chronology.

Material culture typologies—especially of pottery found in multilayer stratified sites—allow archaeologists to establish a relative chronology of archaeological remains based on their specific forms, manufacturing techniques, and decorative styles that varied over time. Such typologies categorize pottery according to its relative age, with the youngest types of pottery found in the uppermost deposition layer, and progressively older types deposited further below the surface as excavations go deeper (see p. 27). Many years of typological

NEW DIRECTIONS
IN BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

Biblical archaeology has changed significantly over the past five decades. In this series developed specially for **BAR**'s 50th anniversary, leading scholars offer their perspectives on how the field has evolved and what the future may hold. In this essay, archaeological dating specialist **Yoav Vaknin** explores both traditional and advanced scientific techniques that are helping today's archaeologists resolve longstanding historical and chronological debates, especially related to the time of the biblical kings.

TODD BOLEN/BIBLEPLACES.COM

DATING SOLOMON. Many scholars claim this six-chambered gate at Megiddo was built under King Solomon (1 Kings 9:15). One of several "Solomonic" gates excavated in Israel and Judah, this monumental structure would presumably date to the tenth century BCE. Other archaeologists, however, have argued these gates should be dated a century later, to the time of King Omri. Although stratigraphic analysis can determine only how old a built structure is relative to earlier or later archaeological deposits, modern scientific methods can provide absolute dates. The most reliable dating results come from the combination of both absolute and relative dating techniques.

research and the comparison of pottery typologies from multiple sites have produced a high-resolution sequence of relative dates—extending from prehistory to the modern era—that is widely accepted by most archaeologists working in the southern Levant today.

Traditionally, correlating this relative dating to absolute dates has been based on connecting archaeological finds with historical information. For instance, the early Israeli archaeologist Yigael Yadin dated the Iron Age gates at Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer to the time of Solomon based on the biblical verse that attributes the fortification of these cities to Solomon (1 Kings 9:15). Therefore, the pottery found around these gates was traditionally dated to the tenth century. As **BAR** readers know, however, Yadin's hypothesis was challenged in the 1990s by Israel Finkelstein, who argued, initially also using ceramic typologies and biblical evidence (e.g., 1 Kings 21), that the archaeological contexts traditionally associated with Solomon should instead be dated to the ninth century, the time of kings Omri and Ahab of Israel.*

About two decades ago, the Iron Age chronology debate transformed dramatically with the increased application of radiocarbon dating to biblical archaeology. The growing use of this method has indeed improved our understanding of the absolute chronology of the period. However, this method has not yet resolved the debate, because it is contingent upon specific types of materials, namely short-lived organic remains, such as seeds, which may not always be available for analysis. Furthermore, radiocarbon analysis provides date ranges—typically on the order of several decades—that are often too large to draw historical conclusions about specific periods or events. Statistical models can help narrow these ranges, but often require the archaeologist to impose subjective considerations or limits on the data that may not be justified, leading to biased or problematic dating.

In recent years, archaeomagnetism has emerged as a complementary tool to allow for a more comprehensive and reliable dating framework that enhances chronological precision. This technique measures the earth's magnetic field as imprinted in burnt materials, such as mudbricks, hearths, and pottery, which are often abundant at archaeological sites. It takes advantage of the fact that after these materials are heated, they capture the direction and intensity of the magnetic field while they cool,

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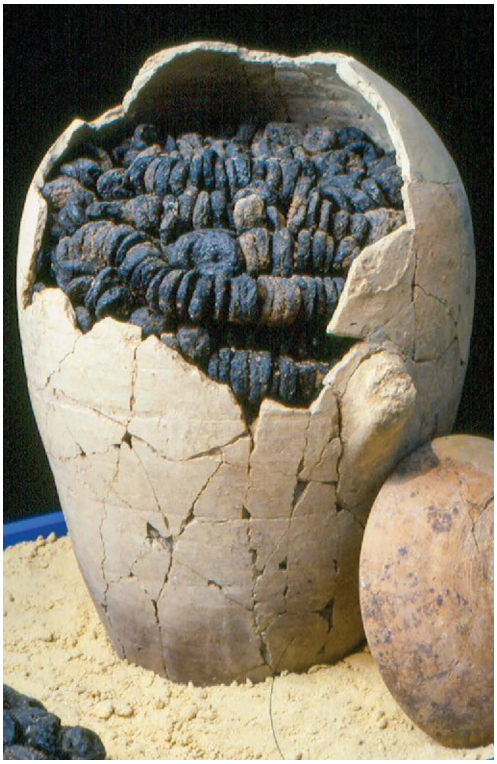
* Hershel Shanks, "A 'Centrist' at the Center of Controversy: BAR Interviews Israel Finkelstein," **BAR**, November/December 2002.



ASOR PHOTO COLLECTION, PHOTO BY ILAN STULMAN

SEEDS OF TRUTH. **Materials of plant or animal origin, such as seeds, fruits, and textiles, can be dated through radiocarbon analysis. The method takes advantage of the fact that all organisms absorb the radioactive isotope of carbon (^{14}C), which decays at a constant rate once the plant or animal dies. By measuring the residual amount of ^{14}C in the organic matter, scientists can estimate when the replenishment stopped and thus determine the age of an excavated find. Known as radiocarbon dating, this method is especially useful for absolute dating of the early part of the Iron Age (c. 1200–800 BCE). Pictured here is a storage jar with burnt figs from the site of Tel Miqne (biblical Ekron), which was destroyed at the end of the Late Bronze Age, around 1200 BCE.**

effectively “locking in” a snapshot of the earth’s magnetic environment.* This phenomenon, known as thermoremanent magnetization, enables scientists to retrieve valuable information about the past orientation and intensity of the magnetic field.

With these tools, we can determine if materials were burned and reconstruct their firing temperatures, even at relatively low temperatures starting from 200 degrees Celsius (392 degrees Fahrenheit). These tools can also determine if the burnt materials cooled in the same orientation in which archaeologists found them. This information is crucial for identifying site formation processes. For instance, burnt mudbricks in the archaeological record can be the result of their pre-firing in a kiln (prior to their use as construction material) *or* their firing during a destructive conflagration.

In the City of David excavations in Jerusalem, for example, archaeomagnetic analysis shed light on a significant incident during which a monumental structure was burned and ultimately collapsed.[1] Similarly, at Tell es-Safi (Gath of the Philistines), our findings revealed that, contrary to earlier suggestions, a structure was built of sundried rather than pre-fired mudbricks that were burned only during the building’s fiery destruction.[2] This observation strengthens the theory that in the Levant mudbricks were not pre-fired as part of the manufacturing process during the Iron Age, a practice that likely began only during the first century BCE or later.

The magnetic data recovered from Jerusalem and Gath were used as chronological anchors for archaeomagnetic dating across much of Israel. The Jerusalem destruction layer was dated historically and archaeologically to the Babylonian destruction of 586 BCE. The destruction layer at Gath was the result of the city’s conquest by King Hazael of Aram-Damascus, mentioned in the Bible (2 Kings 12:18). This event is dated by radiocarbon and historical sources to approximately 830 BCE. Together with other chronological anchors, such as the destruction of Lachish by the Assyrian king Sennacherib in 701 BCE, the magnetic data from Jerusalem and Gath were

SHAI HALEVI / ISRAEL ANTIQUITIES AUTHORITY

MOVING THE NEEDLE. **When heated, the magnetic minerals contained in many archaeological materials tend to rearrange their inner magnetic orientation. Since this orientation aligns with the earth’s magnetic field, which varies over time, scientists can determine when the material was last heated. Known as archaeomagnetic dating, this method is most useful for dating destruction layers, where a building or object was exposed to high temperatures during a conflagration event. In this photo from the Givati Parking Lot excavation in Jerusalem, author Yoav Vaknin uses a special compass to mark a burnt plaster floor with horizontal lines, as necessary for archaeomagnetic analysis.**

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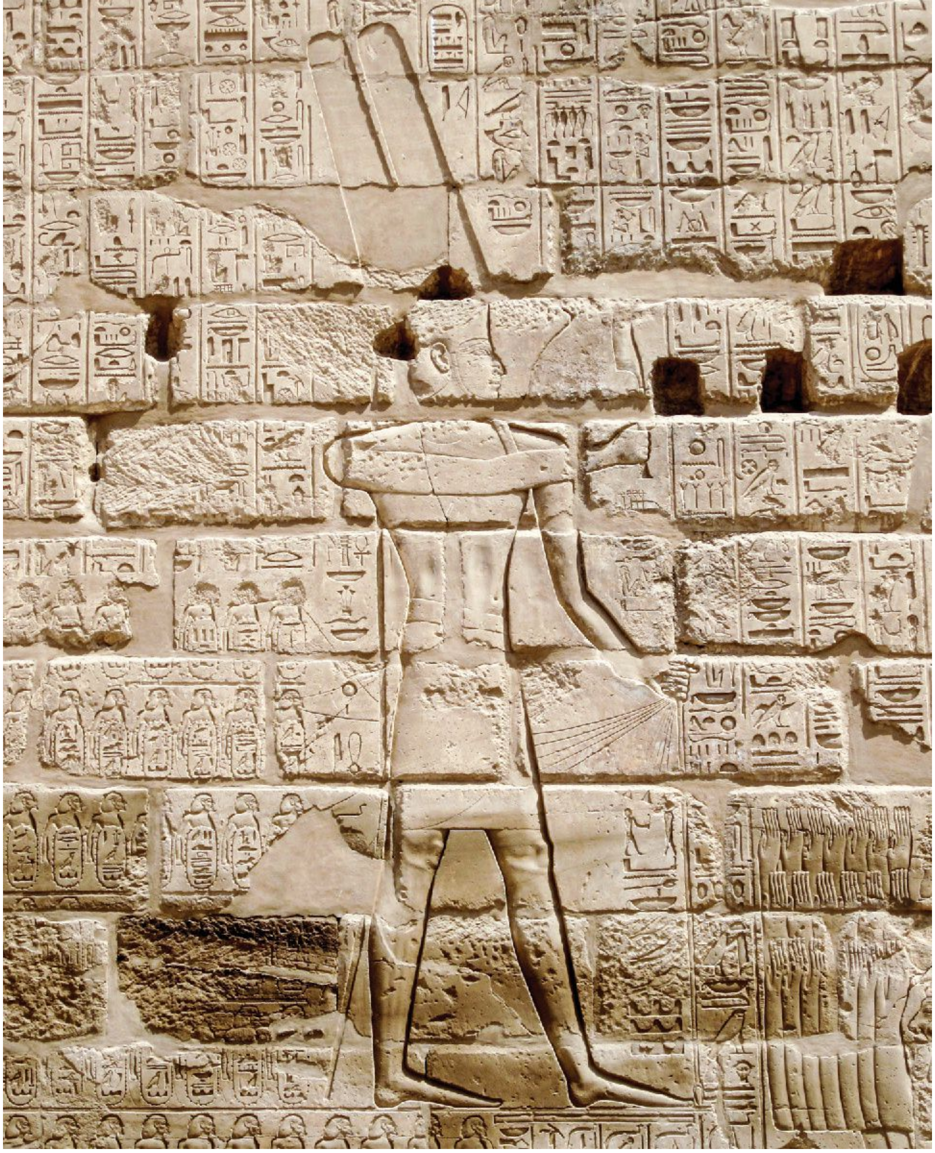
* See Nathan Steinmeyer, “Arch-Tech: Dating Biblical Battles,” **BAR**, Summer 2023.



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BIBLICAL BATTLES. **Recent archaeomagnetic research across the southern Levant has produced a high-precision model of the ever-changing magnetic field in the region. This makes it possible to pin down dates for several battles mentioned in the Bible, including the Levantine campaign of Pharaoh Shoshenq I (biblical Shishak) to the southern Levant in the late tenth century BCE. In his relief at the Temple of Amun in Karnak (above), Shoshenq lists Rehov and Beth Shean among the many polities he conquered, depicted here as bound prisoners identified with labels. Using archaeomagnetic dating, archaeologists have suggested connecting specific destruction levels at those sites with Shoshenq's campaign of 925 BCE.**

used to create a high-precision model of the ever-changing magnetic field in the Levant.[3]

This model is now being used to date destruction layers and artifacts whose dating has been debated. Specifically, it has been shown that the destruction of Beth Shean, previously assumed to be associated with Hazael and thus dated to around 830, took place earlier, either at the end of the tenth century or at the beginning of the ninth. According to magnetic dating, this destruction likely occurred around the same time that the apiary in nearby Tel Rehov was destroyed. In the Temple of Amun at Karnak, Rehov and Beth Shean are mentioned side by side in the list of cities conquered by Pharaoh Shoshenq I (biblical Shishak) in the late tenth century. The archaeomagnetic dating of these two destruction layers could match the date of Shoshenq's campaign, which is also mentioned in the Bible (1 Kings 14:25–26).

Each of the dating methods discussed above has its advantages and limitations. Ceramic typology is well established and enables high-resolution relative chronology. However, since changes in pottery do not occur overnight and often take place over several decades, typological methods are often unable to pinpoint periods of cultural or political transition. Furthermore, pottery styles are closely linked to specific peoples and cultures and therefore do not enable synchronization of chronologies across large areas.

Radiocarbon analysis remains the major tool for absolute dating of the early part of the Iron Age (c. 1200–800 BCE), but can be complemented by archaeomagnetic dating which can narrow its date ranges. For the eighth to the fifth centuries, archaeomagnetic dating is unique in its ability to provide high-resolution absolute dates. It can also be used to date strata where no organic remains were preserved or recorded (as was the case in many earlier excavations where only pottery was kept). Finally, unlike ceramic typology, archaeomagnetism can be used to synchronize finds unearthed hundreds of miles apart, since the magnetic field is typically uniform across large areas and regions.

Despite more than two decades of intensive radiocarbon studies, the Iron Age chronology debate has not been resolved. Instead, proponents of both the high and low chronologies rely on their own radiocarbon results and statistical models to support their respective views. In my view, only the combination of radiocarbon and archaeomagnetic dating methods applied to large chronological data sets can resolve this debate, creating a firmer and more accurate chronological framework for biblical archaeology.

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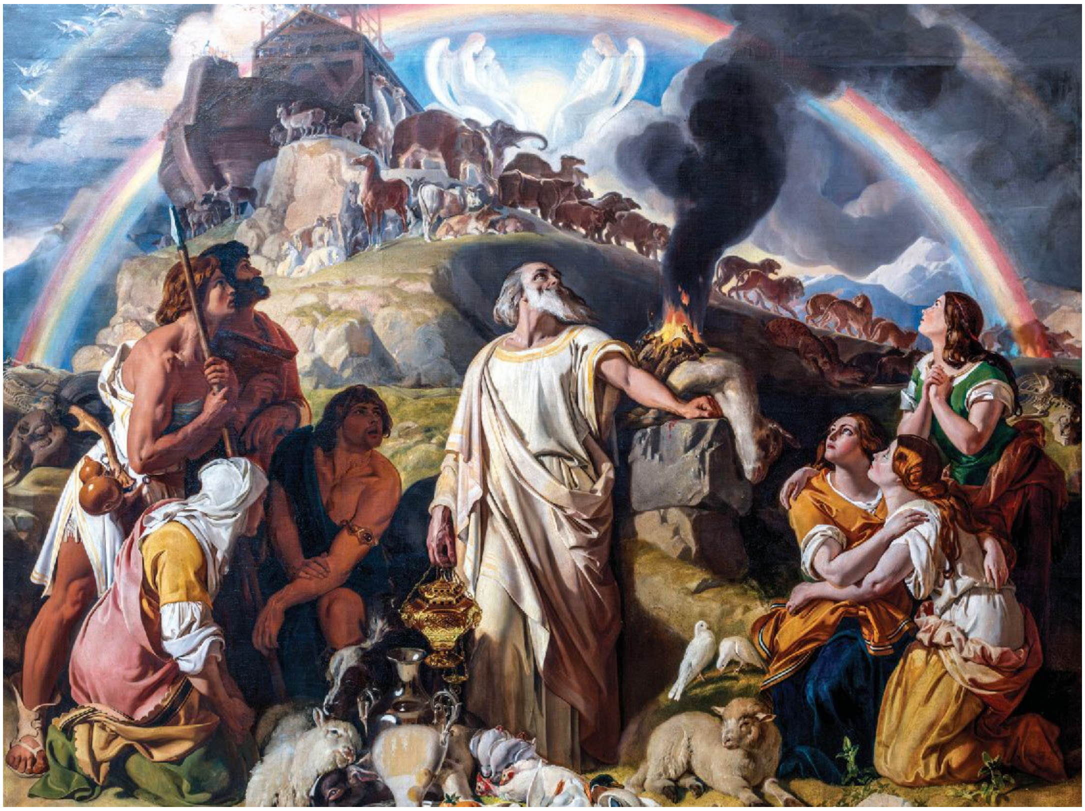
[1] Yoav Vaknin et al., "The Earth's Magnetic Field in Jerusalem During the Babylonian Destruction: A Unique Reference for Field Behavior and an Anchor for Archaeomagnetic Dating," *PLOS ONE* 15.8 (2020), doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0237029.

[2] Yoav Vaknin et al., "Applying Thermal Demagnetization to Archaeological Materials," *PLOS ONE* 18.10 (2023), doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0289424.

[3] Yoav Vaknin et al., "Reconstructing Biblical Military Campaigns Using Geomagnetic Field Data," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 119.44 (2022), doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2209117119.



In this 1847 painting by Daniel Maclise, Noah and his family perform a sacrifice after the flood.

IANDAGNALL COMPUTING / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

The Table of Nations: A Geographic Odyssey

GUY DARSHAN

ACCORDING TO THE BOOK OF GENESIS, after the great flood receded, Noah's three sons disembarked from the ark, and "from them the whole world branched out" (9:19). Genesis 10 then provides a detailed account of where Noah's descendants settled. It presents a genealogical list of names known as the Table of Nations, with each name representing a different group of people.[1] For instance, Javan signifies the Ionians or Greek groups in the northwest, Madai indicates the Medes in the northeast, and Hazarmaveth represents the people of Hadramaut, located in the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula, among many others spanning a vast geographic expanse.

In recent years, scholars have pondered how the biblical writers, who represented an inland population and who typically focused on internal Israelite affairs, gained access to such extensive geographical knowledge. They have proposed various sources of inspiration or information. One potentially fruitful avenue is to examine Mesopotamian literature, considering the Table of Nations' association with the Flood narrative (which originated in Mesopotamia) and the broader influence of Mesopotamian culture on Israelite literary models. Mesopotamian literature features several instances of geographical and encyclopedic texts, such as the *Babylonian Map of the World* and works detailing the extent of Sargon II's empire, such as the *Sargon Geography*.[2] Both texts demonstrate substantial geographical knowledge and literary prowess. However, scholars acknowledge that Mesopotamian geographical compositions differ from the biblical Table of Nations in terms of content, genre, and extent of geographical focus. Unlike the Table of Nations, which primarily serves as a genealogical lineage listing the eponymous descendants of the protagonist of the Flood story, these Mesopotamian works primarily emphasize geographical details. Thus, while the two bodies of literature may share common elements, the biblical Table of Nations stands apart in its distinct focus and purpose.

Furthermore, although the biblical Flood story has its origins in Mesopotamia, none of its Mesopotamian precursors depicts the protagonist or his sons as the fathers of the world's nations, nor do they emphasize the genealogies of these eponymous fathers. Figures such as Ziusudra, the Sumerian flood hero, and Utnapishtim in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* attain eternal life but are subsequently removed from the human sphere, with their descendants left unmentioned.

Many years ago, Umberto Cassuto briefly proposed an alternative way of understanding the origins of the Table of Nations. He noticed the similarities between it and the lamentation for Tyre in Ezekiel 27, both of which demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of geography.[3] In this lamentation, Ezekiel vividly portrays Tyre as a grand and opulent ship, constructed from the finest materials sourced from various regions across the ancient world (Ezekiel 27:3–7). Nations from far and wide participated in the operation of this ship: "The inhabitants of Sidon and Arvad were your rowers … The elders of Byblos and its artisans were within you … Paras and Lud and Put were in your army," and so forth (27:8–10). Drawing a parallel between Ezekiel's prophecy concerning Tyre and the Table of Nations in Genesis 10, Cassuto proposed that both lists of peoples might be rooted in geographical traditions acquired by Phoenician traders and settlers through their extensive connections with surrounding lands.

Unfortunately, only a few literary works have survived from the ancient Phoenician world that might strengthen Cassuto's hypothesis, largely due to the prevalent practice in the Levant of writing on perishable materials. Nonetheless, there is some late fragmentary evidence suggesting that Phoenician literary traditions did include lists of eponymous names. The use of geographical or ethnic names in genealogies in the style of Genesis 10 can be found, for example, in the second-century CE writings of Philo of Byblos (as preserved by Eusebius), who apparently drew upon earlier Phoenician traditions; for example, he offers a description of an old generation of peoples bearing the names of mountains or mountain ranges, including Casius (Mt. Zaphon), Lebanon, and Anti-Lebanon (Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel* 1.9–10). The next generation saw the birth of two brothers whose parentage is not specified: Samemroumos, also called High-in-Heaven (Hypsouranios), who founded Tyre, and his brother Ousoos who quarreled with him. The first brother represents *šmm rmm*, a district within the ancient city of Tyre, while the second represents Ushu, the name of mainland Tyre.

Further support for Cassuto's hypothesis may come from early Greek genealogical compositions first put in writing in the late seventh or early sixth century BCE. Recent editions of Hesiod's *Catalogue of Women*, a seminal Greek genealogical work,[4] along with new studies of Greek mythographers in prose, offer a comprehensive approach to early Greek genealogical material and its parallels with the Pentateuch.[5]

DEFINE INTERVENTION

What is a "pesher"?

1. A type of grinding tool
2. A biblical song or hymn
3. A type of biblical commentary
4. Part of a camel's harness
5. An ancient list of tribes or cities

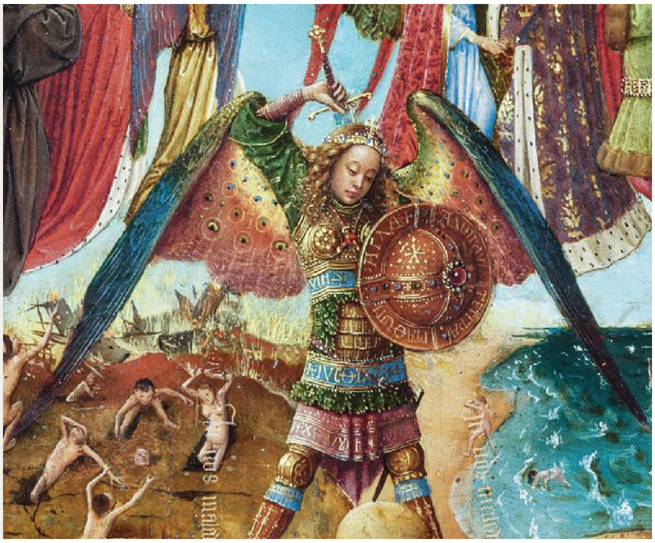
ANSWER ON P. 66

CLIP ART

Do you recognize this portion of a painting of a famous biblical story?

1. ***Noli me tangere*** by Fra Angelico
2. ***The Last Judgment*** by Jan van Eyck
3. ***The Garden of Earthly Delights*** by Hieronymus Bosch
4. ***The Creation of the World and the Expulsion from Paradise*** by Giovanni di Paolo
5. ***The Archangel Michael*** by Dosso Dossi

ANSWER ON P. 67



Notably, similarities between Greek genealogical compositions and Genesis include the depiction of ethnic groups descending from a flood hero. Just as Noah begets Shem, Ham, and Japheth in the biblical narrative, the Greek flood hero Deucalion—son of Prometheus and grandson of the Titan Iapetus—holds a central role in Greek genealogical traditions. Deucalion begets Hellen, the forefather of the Greeks, whose three offspring become the progenitors of major Greek groups: Dorus, Aeolus, and Xuthus, the father of the Ionians and the Acheans (Hesiod, preserved in Plutarch, *Table Talk* 9.747f).

The parallels between biblical sources and Greek genealogical traditions are significant, particularly considering the absence of the dispersion of peoples following the flood in Mesopotamian accounts. While a direct link between biblical and Greek sources cannot be claimed, it is noteworthy that the Greek flood account is believed to have originated from the ancient Near East rather than being indigenous to Greece. The flood protagonist holds a prominent place in Greek genealogical traditions, although the flood story itself did not attain the same prominence in Greece as it did in the ancient Near East. Scholars suggest that the flood story reached the Greek world through contact with civilizations in the northern Levant or Syria during the Archaic period (c. eighth–fifth centuries BCE). It is plausible that this Syro-Levantine flood narrative included the genealogical pattern of placing the flood protagonist at the head of genealogical lists, along with other unique motifs.

If the Greek flood story indeed reflects Syro-Levantine traditions, then this may further support the claim that the biblical Table of Nations is based on geographical, mythological, and genealogical traditions that circulated in the eastern Mediterranean. Writers from this region described their history and delineated their ethnic identity in comparison to neighboring groups by drawing upon the Mesopotamian legacy and reworking these traditions and old notions in a new spirit. Thus, the genealogical-geographical lists in Genesis 10 are but examples of similar traditions prevalent in the eastern Mediterranean. Although the Mesopotamian geographical texts cannot serve as a close model to the biblical Table of Nations, the lament to Tyre in Ezekiel 27 and several Greek genealogical works preserve similar broad geographical traditions and may attest to interconnections and interrelations between civilizations of the pre-Hellenistic eastern Mediterranean.

[1] For an in-depth study of this topic, see Guy Darshan, "From Lists to Historiography: The Table of Nations (Genesis 10) in Its Eastern Mediterranean Context," in Mait Kõiv, ed., *Making Lists in the Ancient World: Memory, Status, Identity* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, forthcoming).

[2] See Wayne Horowitz, "The Isles of the Nations," in J.A. Emerton, ed., *Studies in the Pentateuch* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), pp. 35–43; and Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), p. 30 n. 12.

[3] Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, Vol. II: From Noah to Abraham: Genesis VI 9–XI 32* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1964), pp. 193–194.

[4] See Reinhold Merkelbach and Martin L. West, eds., "Fragmenta Selecta," in F. Solmsen, ed., *Hesiodi, Theogonia, Opera et Dies, Scutum*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1990); and G.W. Most, ed., *Hesiod, The Shield, Catalogue of Women, Other Fragments*, 2nd ed. (Loeb Classical Library 503; Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2018).

[5] See Guy Darshan, *Stories of Origins in the Bible and Ancient Mediterranean Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2023).

WHENCE-A-WORD?

"Writing on the Wall"

THE COMMON PHRASE "writing on the wall" comes from the biblical story of Daniel and the Babylonian king Belshazzar (Daniel 5) in which a mysterious inscription predicts the king's impending doom.

In the Book of Daniel, the Babylonian king Belshazzar throws a party for some 1,000 of his noble guests at which he decides to drink from cups that his predecessor, Nebuchadnezzar, had taken from the Jerusalem Temple. Suddenly, a mysterious hand appears, writing on the plaster wall an inscription that nobody seems able to decipher. Then comes Daniel (also called Belteshazzar), who during his exile in Babylon was made the chief of the Babylonian magicians, having explained previously the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar about a tree (Daniel 4). He reads the writing on the wall as *mene, mene, teqel, uparsin*, translating it as "numbered, numbered, weighed, and divided."

Paradoxically, the Book of Daniel is one of only two biblical books written mostly in Aramaic. Sixth-century Babylonians would have been able to understand the language, so it is confusing that King Belshazzar and his wise men cannot read the sentence. It could be due to some kind of cryptography, or perhaps they simply do not understand what they are reading. Nevertheless, Daniel interprets the supernatural inscription as a divine judgment against Belshazzar, explaining that God has "numbered" the king's days, that the king has been "weighed" and found wanting, and that his kingdom has been "divided" and given to the Medes and Persians. Although modern scholars continue to wrestle with the sentence's grammar, Daniel's interpretation uses the double meaning of each word's root letters: *mnh* meaning both "to count" and "to finish"; *tql* meaning "to weigh" and "to be wanting"; and *prs* meaning "to divide" and "Persia."

In modern usage, the inscription on the plaster wall in Belshazzar's palace at Babylon signifies something apparently ominous. Sometimes referred to with the shorthand expression *menetekel*, the phrase "writing on the wall" is synonymous with a clear warning sign heralding someone's doom or an inevitable catastrophe.

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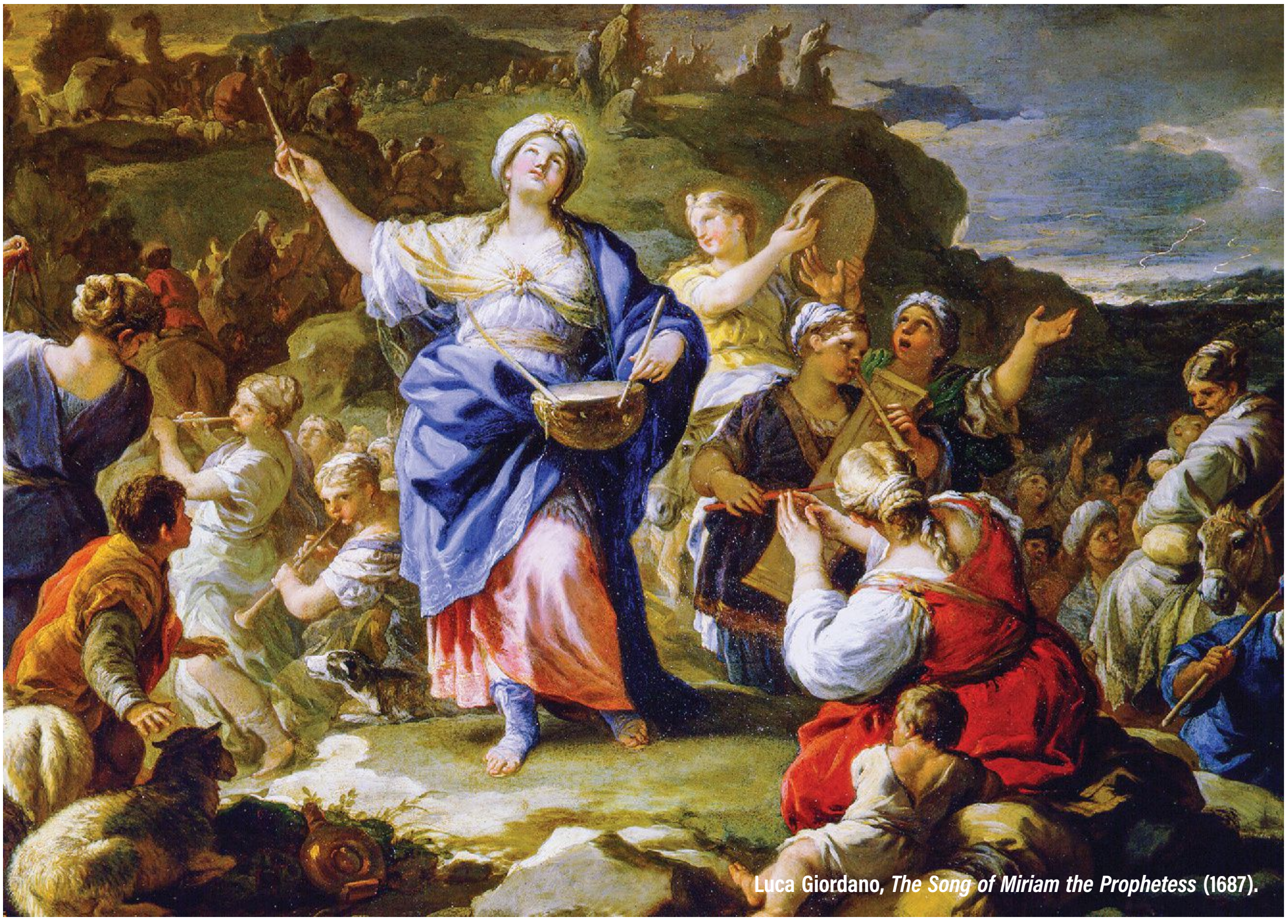
Luca Giordano, *The Song of Miriam the Prophetess* (1687).

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Women and Prophecy in Biblical Israel

SUSAN ACKERMAN

ATTEMPTS TO DEFINE the biblical prophets often start with the etymology most scholars accept for the Hebrew word for "prophet": *nabi* (a male prophet) and *nebi'a* (a female prophet) are both passive participles of the Hebrew root *nb'*, "to call." A prophet, then, is "one who is called" or, by inference, "one who is called by God," more specifically, "one who is called by God to deliver God's message." Sometimes, these prophets deliver God's message through dramatic acts: In Jeremiah 19, for example, God commands the prophet to break a pottery vessel into pieces in order to symbolize that God intends to "break" the people of Jerusalem—which is to say, God intends to unleash divine wrath upon the people as punishment for the evil things they have done in God's eyes. More typically, though, prophets deliver God's word orally, often by proclaiming, "Thus said Yahweh," and then giving voice to God's pronouncements.

The Bible's women prophets can conform to this definition. An excellent example is Hulda. According to her story, recounted in 2 Kings 22, she is a prophet living in Jerusalem in the 18th year of the reign of King Josiah of Judah (622 BCE).* At the king's command, his secretary, Shaphan, along with several others, seeks her out to "inquire of Yahweh" regarding the credibility of the book of the law that had recently been found in the Jerusalem Temple (2 Kings 22:8). Hulda responds by speaking in the name of Yahweh concerning the book, which most scholars typically identify as some version of the Book of Deuteronomy, reporting that its statutes do indeed reflect God's will and that Judah, having failed to live up to them, will be punished for its transgressions.

Deborah, identified as a prophet in Judges 4, also performs the prophetic function of receiving messages from the deity and then communicating those messages on God's behalf. Thus, according to Judges 4:6, Deborah summons a man named Barak and delivers to him God's command: He is to raise an army and do battle against the Canaanite general Sisera. Deborah further decrees the outcome of the

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* William E. Phipps, "A Woman Was the First to Declare Scripture Holy," *Bible Review*, April 1990.

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battle: “I [Deborah speaks here for God] will give him [Sisera] into your [Barak’s] hand” (Judges 4:7). There are hiccups, however, as Barak refuses to act according to the deity’s command unless Deborah accompanies him to the battlefield. Deborah agrees but warns that Barak’s reticence will redound negatively upon him: “I will surely go with you,” she tells him, “but glory will not come to you via the path you are following, for Yahweh will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman” (Judges 4:9). And so it comes to pass: Deborah goes to the battlefield with Barak, and Sisera’s army is defeated by the Israelite troops, but Sisera himself is killed by a woman named Jael after he flees from the fighting and takes refuge in her tent.*

Another woman prophet, Miriam, is similarly understood as able to fulfill the prophetic role of conveying messages on God’s behalf. In Numbers 12:2, she, along with her brother Aaron, challenges the seemingly sole authority of Moses, God’s ultimate representative (and their other sibling), by asking (rhetorically), “Has he [God] not also spoken through us?”** However, in the biblical text in which Miriam is specifically identified as a prophet (Exodus 15:20–21), the words to which she gives voice are not an oracle she delivers on God’s behalf but a hymn she sings in praise of the deity after the Israelites’ miraculous escape at the Reed (traditionally, “Red”) Sea. Deborah, too, is remembered for singing the hymn found in Judges 5, lauding God for leading the Israelites to victory over Sisera. Our definition of the Bible’s women prophets, therefore, may need to expand to include the roles they had as musicians.

We may also need to expand our definition to include these women’s work as medico-magical authorities who specialize in providing care to Israelite women. In an enigmatic text found in Ezekiel 13:17–23, Ezekiel condemns a cadre of “daughters of your people who prophesy” for, among other things, their use of wrist bands and some kind of head drapes. According to many, these “daughters” are necromancers, who tie snares of some sort to their

---

* Karen Britt and Ra’anan Boustan, “Warrior Women: Deborah and Yael Found at Huqoq,” **BAR**, Winter 2023.

** Hanna Tervanotko, “Biblical Profile: Miriam Through the Ages,” **BAR**, Fall 2023.

DEFINE INTERVENTION (SEE QUIZ ON P. 61)

Answer: ③ A type of biblical commentary

A *pesher* (plural: *pesharim*) is a distinctive style of biblical commentary known most famously from the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is essentially a line-by-line walkthrough of a biblical text, with each line or section followed by an interpretation—a *pesher*—that purports to illuminate or explain the biblical passage.

A number of *pesharim* are attested among the Dead Sea Scrolls, but the most famous is known as *Pesher Habakkuk* (the first columns of which are pictured here). This scroll was one of the initial seven to be discovered, and it continues to shape scholarship on the scrolls and the Qumran community. A sample from this document provides a clear example of the *pesher* style, with the text of the Book of Habakkuk interspersed with comments every few lines:

> “Dread and fearsome are they; their justice and dignity proceed from themselves.” (Habakkuk 1:7)
>
> Its *pesher* (interpretation) concerns the Kittim (Romans), the fear and dread of whom are on all the nations; all their thoughts are premeditated to do evil, and with cunning and treachery they behave toward all the peoples.

Most notable in this example, as throughout the Qumran *pesharim*, is the inclination to read the biblical text as bearing directly on the time and circumstances of the *pesher*’s authorship. Thus here, whereas in the biblical context the verse from Habakkuk is part of a lengthy pronouncement about the Babylonians, the author of the *pesher* reads it instead as a reference to the Romans—the empire in control of the southern Levant when the commentary was written.

The *Pesher Habakkuk* scroll from Qumran.

THE PICTURE ART GALLERY / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO arms to capture dead spirits.[1] However, some other scholars propose that the "daughters who prophesy" sew bands of cloth onto *other* women's wrists and put head drapes on *other* women's heads as medico-magical acts. Similar traditions are known from Mesopotamia, whereby bands and knotted strings were tied around the heads, necks, torsos, and limbs of childbearing women to address difficulties they were facing during their pregnancies.[2]

Overall, there is no simple definition that can capture the many roles the Bible's women prophets seemingly assume. Rather, like women today, ancient Israel's women prophets were the ultimate multitaskers, undertaking a variety of activities on God's behalf.

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[1] See, for example, Esther J. Hamori, *Women's Divination in Biblical Literature: Prophecy, Necromancy and Other Arts of Knowledge* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2015), pp. 167–183; Marjo C.A. Korpel, "Avian Spirits in Ugarit and Ezekiel 13," in Nicolas Wyatt et al., eds., *Ugarit, Religion, and Culture: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Ugarit, Religion and Culture, Edinburgh, July 1994* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1996), pp. 99–113; and Jonathan Stökl, "The *mtnb'wt* in Ezekiel 13 Reconsidered," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 132 (2013), pp. 61–76.

[2] Nancy R. Bowen, "The Daughters of Your People: Female Prophets in Ezek 13:17–23," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 118 (1999), pp. 417–433.

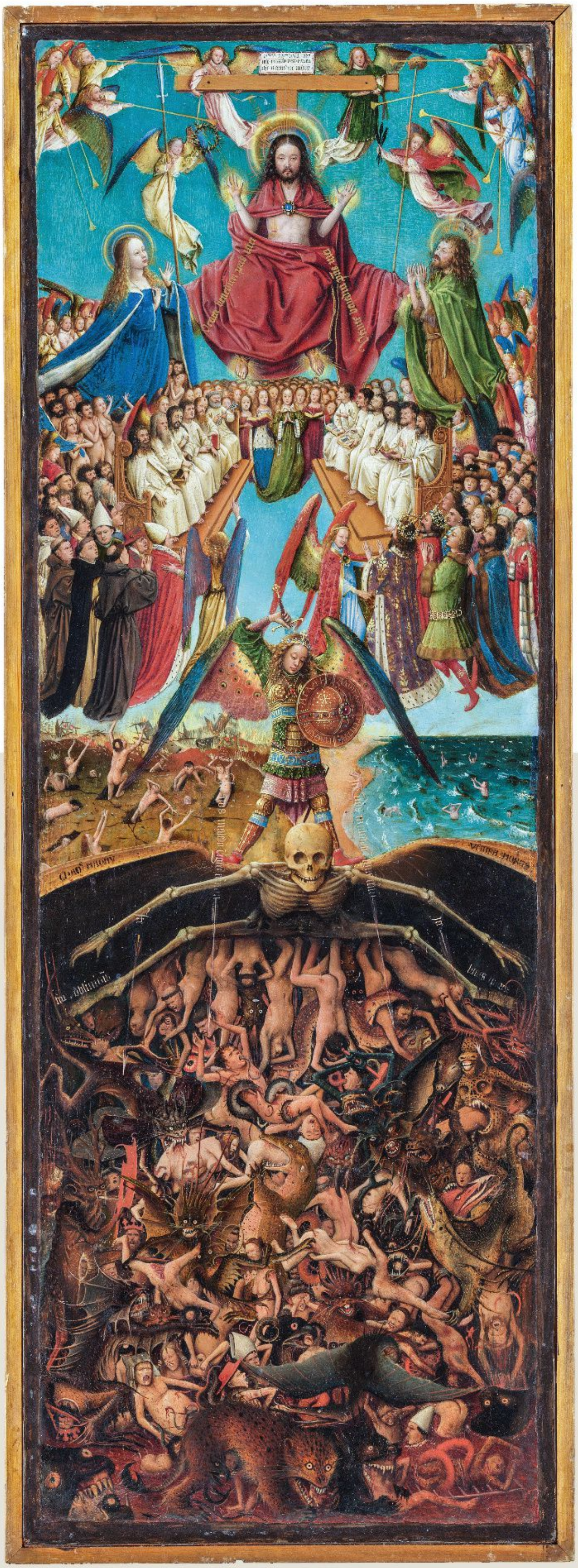
CLIP ART (SEE QUIZ ON P. 61)

Answer: ② *The Last Judgment* by Jan van Eyck

This oil-on-panel painting, completed between 1436 and 1438, depicts the final judgment of Jesus Christ at the end of time. At the top is Jesus himself, flanked by angels and seated at the head of a great council of saints, apostles, virgins, clergy, and nobility. This scene represents heaven. Just below, the archangel in the center of the image calls forth the dead from land and sea. Below is a grim hellscape into which are cast those not admitted into heaven.

The work is paired with another of Van Eyck's paintings depicting the Crucifixion (not shown). Together, the two panels form a diptych, that is, a single work consisting of two parts; however, modern research has revealed that they originally served as the two side panels of a triptych or the doors of a tabernacle or reliquary shrine.

Like its counterpart, *The Last Judgment* measures less than 2 feet in height, showcasing Van Eyck's extraordinary skill at achieving exquisite detail on a miniature scale. In addition to the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin inscriptions within the painting itself, the wood frame also bears inscriptions of biblical texts in both Latin and Middle Dutch.



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Locust

Locusts are a type of grasshopper that can swarm. Since there is no taxonomic difference between grasshoppers and locusts, they are impossible to distinguish in artistic representations. Of approximately 12,000 grasshopper species, which all belong to the family Acrididae, only 19 can swarm and are considered locusts. Two species have lived in the lands of the Bible: the desert locust (*Schistocerca gregaria*) and the migratory locust (*Locusta migratoria*).

Although grasshoppers are solitary winged insects inhabiting grasslands and semi-arid regions of all continents except Antarctica, locusts persist in hot and dry areas, including the Sahara Desert. When conditions are right, locusts change color and transition into the migratory gregarious phase; they then form groups and eventually take to the skies. Riding the winds and consuming their own weight in food every day, locusts can travel great distances devastating crops and pastureland. During such outbreaks, swarms consisting of billions of ravenous insects can cover hundreds of square miles. To this day, locust plagues cause famines and trigger human migrations.

Unsurprisingly, the Hebrew Bible, which uses ten different words to signify the insect or its different stages, portrays locusts as terrible pests (2 Chronicles 7:13; Psalm 105:34–35; Joel 1–2), most famously in the Egyptian plagues narrative (Exodus 10:3–19). In Judges 6:5 and Jeremiah 46:23, enemy

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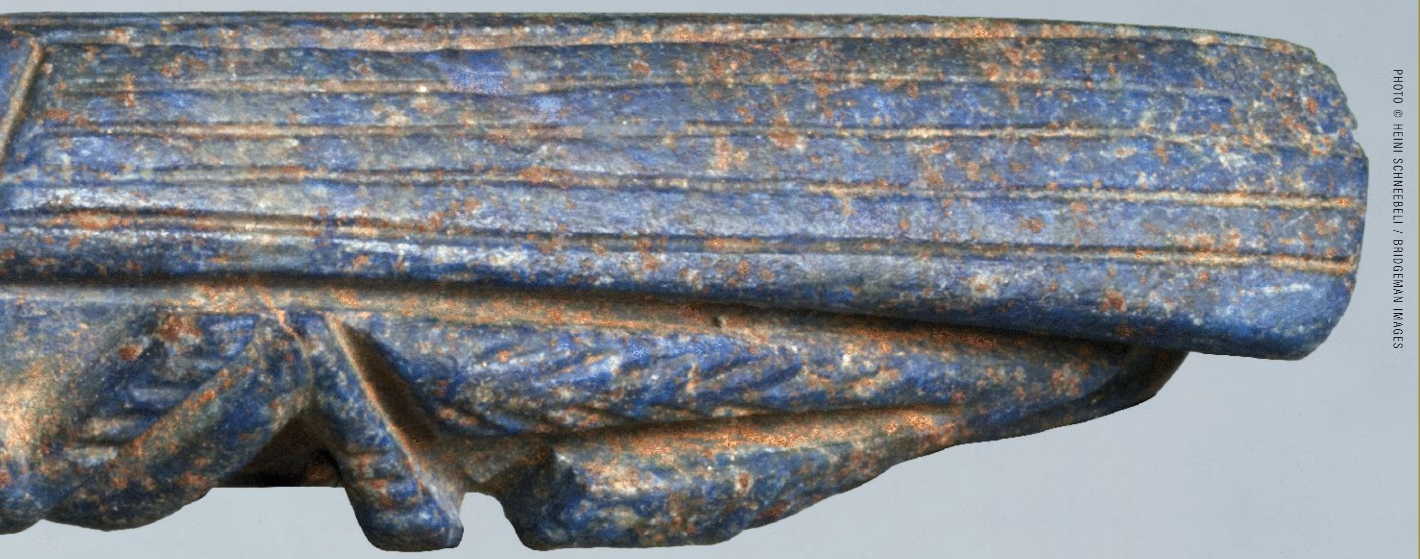

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armies are compared to swarms of locusts, a common literary theme across the ancient Near East. Although the Torah prohibits eating most insects, it permits eating certain types of grasshoppers and locusts (Leviticus 11:22). Indeed, grasshoppers are highly nutritious and have been consumed in different cultures for millennia. In the Gospels, John the Baptist is reported to have lived on "locusts and wild honey" during his wilderness ministry (Matthew 3:4; Mark 1:6).

Among the rare artistic representations of grasshoppers is this small amulet, now in a private collection. Less then 2 inches long, it is made of lapis lazuli and likely comes from Roman-era Egypt. Other ancient illustrations come from Egyptian wall paintings as well as Assyrian reliefs showing servants bringing locusts to a royal feast.

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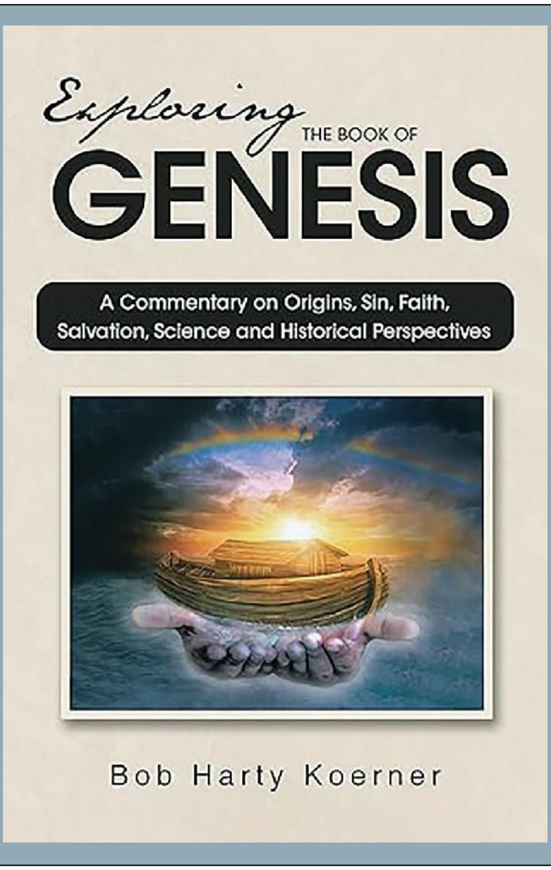
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Glenn Corbett is Editor-in-Chief of *Biblical Archaeology Review* and a specialist in the archaeology of the Holy Land. He has 20+ years of excavation and field experience working on projects in Jordan, Turkey, and Israel. He also spent years living in this forgotten biblical land: JORDAN.

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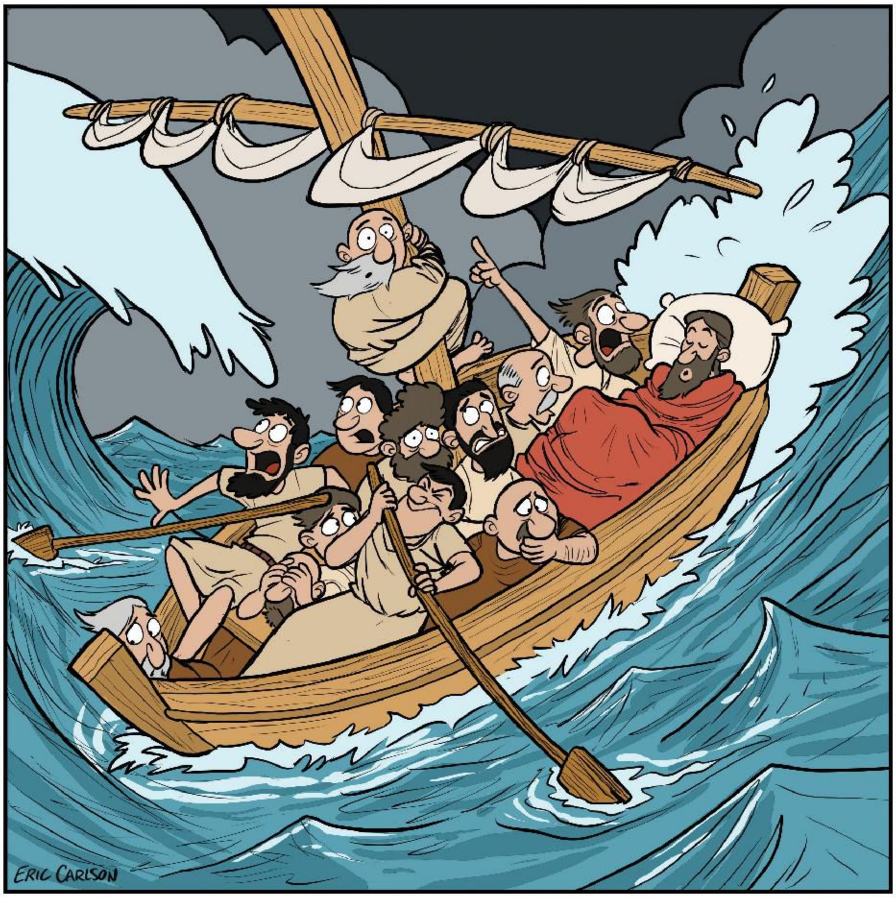


ERIC CARLSON

“Hey Jesus, remember that ‘walking on water’ thing that Peter did?”

DENNIS HEFTY
SALEM, OREGON

Thank you to all those who submitted caption entries for our Winter 2024 cartoon (left), based on Matthew 8:24–26: “A windstorm arose on the sea, so great that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but [Jesus] was asleep. And they went and woke him up, saying, ‘Lord, save us! We are perishing!’ And he said to them, ‘Why are you afraid, you of little faith?’” We are pleased to congratulate **Dennis Hefty** of Salem, Oregon, who wrote the winning caption, and our runners-up:

RUNNERS-UP

“I know you said we need to be baptized, but I think you’re going a little overboard this time!”

GEN DORN
MESA, ARIZONA

“Wake up! The BAS Seminar at Sea brochure didn’t mention this!”

KENT ATWOOD
CLANCY, MONTANA

HONORABLE MENTIONS

“Anything you ask, Lord, but it’s my name on the boat rental!”

ROBERT ALLEN
LAREDO, TEXAS

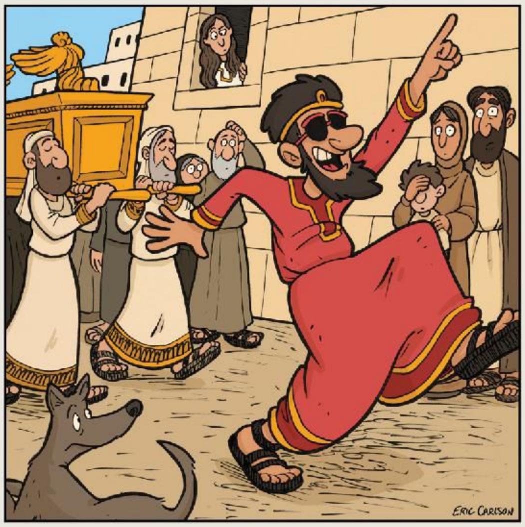
“Everybody’s goin’ surfin’, surfin’ Galilee!”

SUSAN DEBARTOLO
OWASSO, OKLAHOMA

For additional caption entries, as well as past cartoons and captions, please visit **barmag.org/capcontest**.

Write a caption for the cartoon (right) based on 2 Samuel 6:16: “As the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord.” Submit it via our website at **barmag.org/capcontest**.

Please include your name and address. The deadline for entries is **August 15, 2025**. The author of the winning caption will receive a BAS All-Access membership and three gift subscriptions to give **BAR** to friends. Runners-up will receive an All-Access membership and two gift subscriptions for friends.



ERIC CARLSON

2 Samuel 6:16

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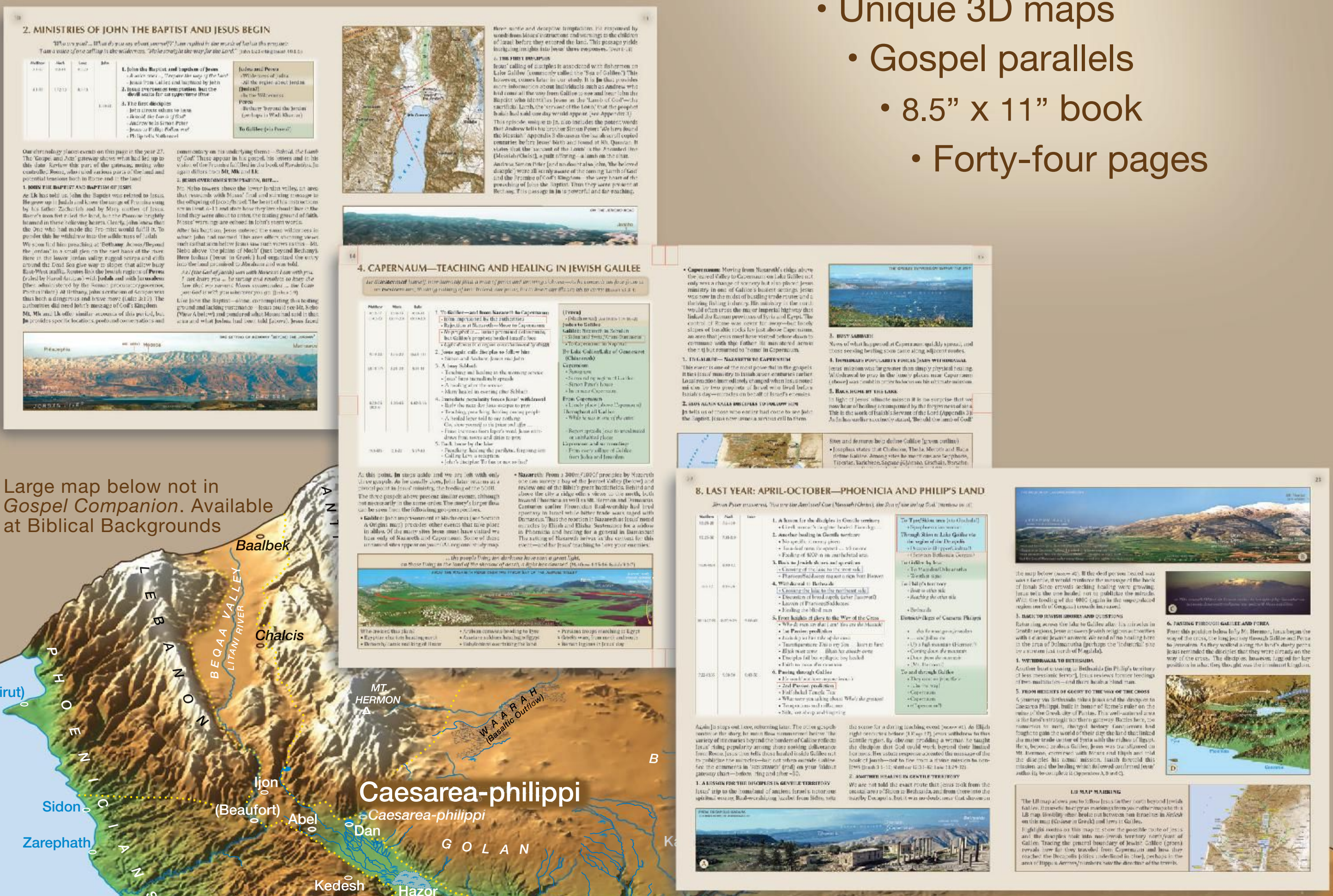

2. MINISTRIES OF JOHN THE BAPTIST AND JESUS BEGIN
4. CAPERNAUM—TEACHING AND HEALING IN JEWISH GALILEE
8. LAST YEAR: APRIL-OCTOBER—PHOENICIA AND PHILIP'S LAND

Large map below not in *Gospel Companion*. Available at Biblical Backgrounds

Baalbek
ANTI-LEBANON
LEBANON
BEQAA VALLEY (LITANI RIVER)
Chalcis
PHOENICIANS
(Beirut)
MT. HERMON
WAARAH (Basaltic Outflow)
Sidon
Ijon
(Beaufort)
Abel
Caesarea-philippi
Dan
GOLAN
Zarephath
Kedesh
Hazor
Meron
Tyre
Bethsaida
Hippus
Capernaum
LAKE GALILEE
Tiberias
YARMUK CANYON
Abila
Gadara
Ramoth-gilead
Beth-arbel
GALILEE
Sepphoris
MT. TABOR
HILL OF MOREH
Ephron
DECAPOLIS
Pella
Jabesh-gilead
GILEAD
Gerasa
JABBOK RIVER
Acco Ptolemais
DUNES
Nazareth
Shimron
JORDAN RIVER
Beth-shan Scythopolis
MT. GILBOA
JABBOK CANYON
Penuel
AMMON
Rabbah Philadelphia (Ammon)
(Haifa)
MT. CARMEL
Jokneam
Megiddo
VALLEY
Taanach
CARMEL RANGE
Dothan
Bezek
Succoth
Tirzah
MT. EBAL
Shechem
MT. GERIZIM
PEREA
MEDEBA PLATEAU
Aruna
Dor
Gath-[-padalla]
Samaria Sebaste
CENTRAL HILL COUNTRY
ISRAEL (SAMARIA)
SAMARIA
Shiloh
Tappuah
Abel-shittim
Abila
Aenon
MT. NEBO
Medeba
Jahaz
Caesarea
SHARON PLAIN
EPHRAIM
Gophna
Bethel
Ai
Jericho
BENJAMIN
Machaerus
Aroer
Dibon
ARNON CANYON
MEDITERRANEAN
SHIPPING
Timnah
Aphek
YARKON RIVER
Arimathea
Beth-horon
Gibeon
Jerusalem
Callirhoe
DEAD SEA
-400m/-1312f (FLUCTUATES)
Ono
Hadid
Lod Lydda
(Tel Aviv)
Joppa
Gezer
AIJALON VALLEY
Aijalon
Zorah
Bethlehem
JUDEA
WILDERNESS
Hebron
Jabneel
Azekah
Socoh
Ashdod Azotus
Adoraim
Ziph
Carmel
Maon
Debir
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PLAIN
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Lachish
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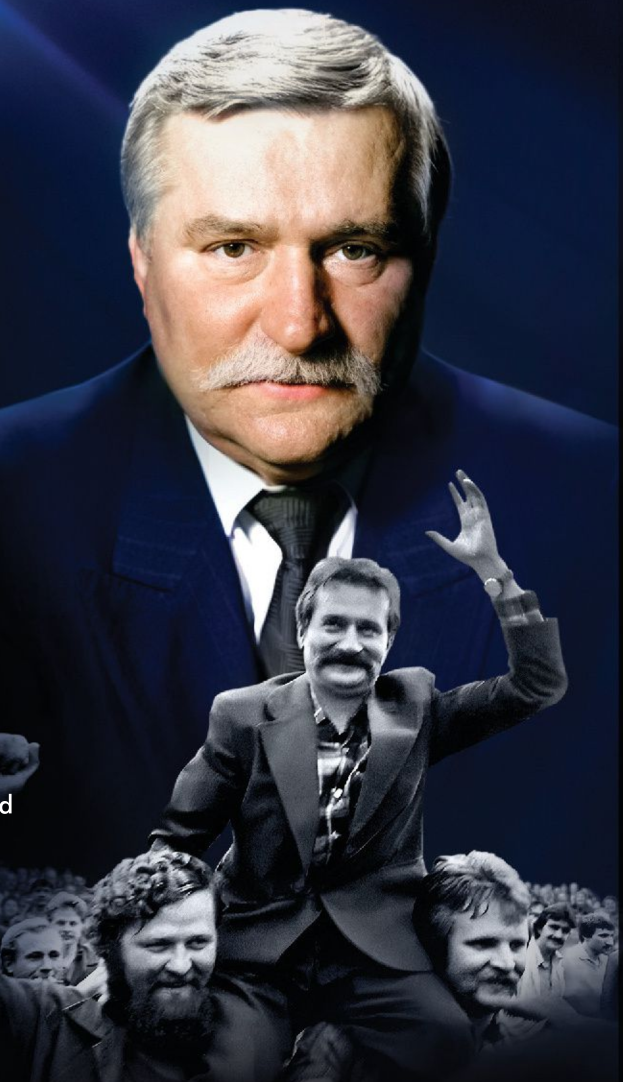

Aug 31	Los Angeles, CA
Sep 2	Phoenix, AZ
Sep 4	San Diego, CA
Sep 6	Oakland, CA
Sep 8	Seattle, WA
Sep 12	Denver, CO
Sep 14	Houston, TX
Sep 18	Austin, TX
Sep 20	Dallas, TX
Sep 22	Atlanta, GA
Sep 24	Columbus, OH
Sep 26	Pittsburgh, PA
Sep 27	Baltimore, MD
Sep 28	Cleveland, OH
Sep 30	Minneapolis, MN
Oct 2	St. Louis, MO
Oct 4	Chicago, IL
Oct 5	Milwaukee, WI
Oct 9	Miami, FL
Oct 11	Orlando, FL
Oct 13	Boston, MA
Oct 15	Charlotte, NC
Oct 17	Philadelphia, PA
Oct 18	New York, NY
Oct 24	Montreal, QC 🇨🇦
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Oct 26	Detroit, MI
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